

# Chronicles

April 1991

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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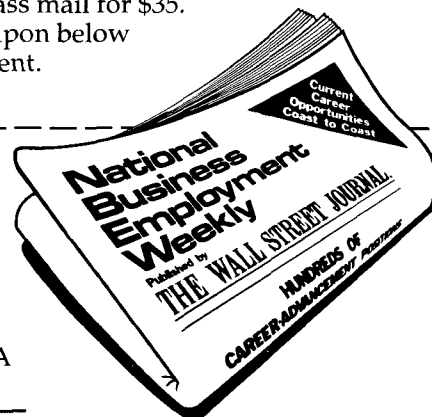
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# Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

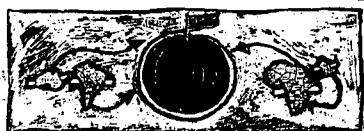
*To catch Dame Fortune's golden smile,  
Assiduous wait upon her;  
And gather gear by ev'ry wile  
That's justified by honor:  
Not for to hide it in a hedge,  
Nor for a train-attendant;  
But for the glorious privilege  
Of being independent.*

—Robert Burns

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Cover illustration by Anna Mycek-Wodecki.

APRIL 1991/3

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**Chronicles**  
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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## POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

### On 'Martin Luther King, Jr.'

For a short while recently, I was persuaded that the reports of plagiarizing by Martin Luther King were mistaken. What persuaded me was the letter from Jon Westling, acting president of Boston University, in the January 1991 issue of *Chronicles*. Perhaps because I grew up in a time when dishonesty was less rampant than now, I tend to accept as true (or at least honest) such unequivocal declarations as "Not a single instance of plagiarism of any sort has been identified." Unless things have fallen apart, one has to believe an assertion like that, coming from a man in Westling's position.

But things have fallen apart. About ten minutes after I was persuaded by Westling's letter, I learned that it was a tissue of falsity. That is, I read the article on King by Theodore Pappas. Poor Westling! It was a grotesque misfortune to have his letter appear in the same issue as Pappas's demonstration that King committed plagiarism galore in his doctoral dissertation. I almost felt sorry for Westling, being shown up so badly, but as they say in boxing, he led with his chin.

And what a punch Pappas landed!

—William Bowen  
Dobbs Ferry, NY

The article by Theodore Pappas in the January 1991 issue of *Chronicles* suggests that Jon Westling of Boston University was either complicit in a cover-up or incompetent in the pursuit of the facts regarding the King plagiarism case. These charges are grossly unfair. I was the dean of the School of Theology when Martin Luther King, Jr. was pursuing doctoral studies in the Graduate School. L. Harold DeWolf and S. Paul Schilling were first and second readers respectively of King's dissertation. DeWolf is deceased and Schilling (retired in 1969) now lives in Maryland. DeWolf was also the major professor for Boozer, whose dissertation is

cited in the recent article.

When Ad Interim President Westling received a communication from John Shelton Reed regarding a forthcoming article on King's dissertation, Westling contacted me for any information I might have about the alleged plagiarism. I had never heard of such a thing. I telephoned Professor Schilling on May 28. He assured me that DeWolf and he had read the dissertation with care and to his knowledge this kind of accusation had never been raised. (Schilling was not on the faculty when Boozer wrote his dissertation.) I advised Jon Westling of my conversation with Schilling. Also, I suggested that the Center for King Studies in Atlanta might appropriately be informed of the allegations.

Jon Westling directed the University's legal counsel to inform Mrs. King's counsel about the allegations. At or about that time Westling got in touch with Clayborne Carson at Stanford and the latter unambiguously denied that there was any plagiarism in King's dissertation. Reed was so informed. The upshot of all these efforts was that no evidence by anyone—not by Reed, or Carson, or Schilling, or Mrs. King—supported the allegations so far as President Westling or I knew. It was on the basis of this lack of evidence that Jon Westling wrote his letter to *Chronicles*.

Whatever evidence has been forthcoming since last May is a matter to be dealt with on its own merits, but the Ad Interim President of Boston University has in no way been involved in any "cover-up" or "incompetence" or falsification of history. In fact, as soon as the story broke in the *Wall Street Journal* this fall, he acted promptly in setting up a committee of investigation. In May both Westling and I believed that the rumor of plagiarism had been laid to rest as just that. Like others, we were startled to learn that quite another scenario of facts and accusations had been evolving all along. I trust that this correction of the article in *Chronicles* will clarify Jon

Westling's actual relation to the unfinished business of the King plagiarism case.

—Walter G. Muelder  
Dean Emeritus, Boston  
University School of Theology  
Boston, MA

Please see *Cultural Revolutions* for a reply.

## On 'Defining Anti-Semitism'

Allan Brownfeld's defense of Pat Buchanan ignored the clearest example of Buchanan's anti-Semitism. In one of his columns, Buchanan wrote that the war Israel wanted would be fought by American soldiers. He then listed a representation of the surnames that would fight in such a war. He was careful to list an Anglo name, an Irish name, a black name, and a Hispanic name—obviously missing was a Jewish name. The implication of Buchanan's omission, that Jews would promote the war but not fight in it, was fairly explicit. Brownfeld's ignorance of this evidence, or his decision to ignore it, renders his defense of Buchanan not very reliable.

—Barry Udoff  
New York, NY

## On 'New York vs. New York'

Bill Kauffman made some good points in his article (January 1991), but his bitterness directed at all things "downstate" caused him to overlook a few facts. Somehow he manages to make Manhattan synonymous with the whole downstate region, which would include New York City's outer boroughs, Westchester, and Rockland counties and Long Island. He writes that the upstate-downstate division can be seen in the differences between "an Elba onion farmer" and Jackie Onassis, Reverend Al Sharpton and Billy Joel. What kind of comparison is that? Kauffman must know that there are a few million other people in the Metropolitan New York area whose lifestyles are much more similar to that farmer in Elba than to such celebrities. And then he views David Leavitt (who is not native to the area) as the laureate of the whole New York region—even though most Metro New Yorkers probably have never heard of him. I am not saying that there are not any significant differences between the upstate and downstate regions—ethnicity, urbanism, and suburbanism are the most obvious. But Kauffman should realize the variations within downstate also.

By associating Billy Joel with those other New Yorkers, Kauffman overlooks the fact that Joel is a native Long Islander who has fought to maintain the vanishing culture of the baymen in eastern Long Island, and has helped make his fellow islanders proud of a region that is too often seen as only a real estate deal or a sleep-away camp for rich Manhattanites. Another interesting example of differences within downstate New York is the classic New York accent—which Kauffman has ridiculed in recent articles. Long Islanders and others from New Jersey and NYC's outer boroughs have recently been attending classes to get rid of these terrible accents so they can land a job in the Big Apple. It seems that this accent is deemed provincial and *déclassé* in Manhattan—which seems populated more by Midwesterners than native New Yorkers now anyway. So while Kauffman should be applauded for his call for an independent upstate, he should realize that the downstate monolith he dreads so much is itself a divided house.

—R.P. Cimino  
Wantagh, NY

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## CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

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**THE STORY OF** Martin Luther King, Jr.'s plagiarism has elicited a number of responses, most of them disingenuous. Walter Muelder, the former dean of Boston University's School of Theology, would like to exculpate Boston University's Jon Westling (see page 4) but only succeeds in making matters worse. Mr. Muelder casually reveals what should have been evident all along: that from beginning to end, from the December 1989 interview with the London *Telegraph* to the present, King Papers editor Clayborne Carson has consistently misrepresented the facts and distorted the evidence. According to Mr. Muelder, Mr. Carson denied King's

plagiarism to Mr. Westling "unambiguously," and apparently this is where the latter got the notion that "not a single instance" of plagiarism is evident in any of the 343 pages of King's dissertation. One scholar who did not hesitate to use the "P-word" was King's biographer, David Garrow. Misled by the *New York Times*' November 10 story, we accused Mr. Garrow of being part of the cover-up. We were mistaken and apologize. Mr. Garrow found out the story about the same time as other King scholars and had been assured that Mr. Carson would be forthcoming with the truth.

In fact, even though it is now known that King plagiarized far more than just

his doctoral dissertation, including many of his other essays and speeches, Mr. Carson continues his campaign of deception and distortion. An article in the November/December 1990 *Stanford Observer* quotes him as saying "his [King's] professors did not expect originality in his compositions." Surely Dr. Carson, Ph.D., knows that the chief requirement of a doctoral dissertation is that it constitute an *original* contribution to scholarship. But the prize for duplicity goes to the *Stanford Observer* itself, which entitled its unsigned article "Allegation of Plagiarism." Even Carson has quit using the word "allegation."

Mr. Carson laid on another coat of

whitewash in a January 16 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. In a tangle of half-truths and misrepresentations, Mr. Carson comes to the nub of the matter: "His legitimate utilization of political, philosophical, and literary texts—particularly those expressing the nation's democratic ideals—inspired and mobilized many Americans, thereby advancing the cause of social justice." Translation: plagiarism is excusable if done for the furtherance of "politically correct" causes. Having settled the ethical question for us, Mr. Carson then says we are to admire "King as the pre-eminent American orator of the 20th century," even while "recognizing that textual appropriation was one aspect of a successful composition method." It has always been realized that orators and scholars do their work in a tradition in which ideas and expressions can become common property, but what would we think of Burke or Lincoln if they systematically attempted to pass off the work of other men as their own? The answer is clear: we would classify them with the likes of a Joe Biden—or a Martin Luther King.

Mr. Muelder's letter also clarifies something about Jon Westling of Boston University: it reveals the seriousness with which Mr. Westling viewed this matter. After John Reed's letter, Mr. Westling contacted Mr. Muelder and had the latter contact Mr. S. Paul Schilling of Maryland, the second reader of King's dissertation. Mr. Westling then contacted Mrs. King and the Center for King Studies in Atlanta, Clayborne Carson of Stanford, wrote John Reed in North Carolina, and even felt the need to address the "false story" of King's plagiarism, which by his own admission was spreading "like whooping cough among the unvaccinated," by writing *Chronicles* the now infamous October 5 letter. Mr. Westling obviously ran up a lot of phone bills and used a lot of stamps.

Why, then, if Mr. Westling so clearly understood the seriousness of this matter and the serious repercussions that such a story could have for the reputation of the university he represents, did he rely exclusively on information from outside sources, some of which would have an obvious interest in seeing such a charge denied and

such a story suppressed? Why, in other words, did he do everything but the simplest and most logical and conclusive action of all, that of picking up the theses and examining the evidence for himself? Or why, at the very least, did he not have an aide, or his theology department, do it for him? After all, he and Boston University were in the best position of anyone to either deny or substantiate the validity of the charge. Boston University is the only university in the world that has both King's and Boozer's dissertations.

Mr. Westling has floated a number of excuses to justify his actions. His plea to the *Chicago Tribune* was that "I'm just an academic administrator trying to keep the story straight." Westling apparently is even trying to discredit *Chronicles* by telling people that we sat on the evidence and deliberately delayed our story all in an effort to make him look bad. In fact, we received a copy of Boozer's dissertation a mere two weeks before Mr. Westling sent us his letter, and we received Boozer's actual dissertation from Boston University's Interlibrary Loan Department only four days before; his own library would be happy to substantiate this fact. A first draft of my article was completed within two weeks of receiving the evidence, which then began the three-month publishing process through which all *Chronicles* articles must pass.

Boston University had the opportunity to control the cards in this matter, but Mr. Westling gave away the game. By placing his and his university's reputation in the hands of Clayborne Carson and his coterie at the King Papers Project, Mr. Westling earned the academic dunce cap awarded to him by James Warren of the *Chicago Tribune*.

As we now know, a number of major newspapers knew the facts of this story but deliberately refused to publish them. According to Charles Babington's January 28, 1991, article in the *New Republic*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, and the *New Republic* had all refused to run articles though at least one editor at each publication knew of this story as far back as last spring. The backpeddling of the *Wall Street Journal* has been particularly entertaining: the *Journal*

reported the plagiarism on November 9, ran a November 15 editorial that says King's plagiarism doesn't reflect on the character of Mr. King but rather "tells something about the rest of us," and then published a January 21 editorial by a Professor George McLean that praises King's plagiarized dissertation as "a contribution to scholarship for which his doctorate was richly deserved."

The way in which the *Journal* reported this story did not go unnoticed by the London *Telegraph*, which wrote: "such is the cravenness of the U.S. media when it comes to race that no newspaper followed [our December 1989] story, until Friday. Then, in an article full of apologetic, mealy-mouthed phrases, the *Wall Street Journal* confirmed our findings." But perhaps the *Journal's* cravenness shouldn't have surprised us. After all, the *Journal* tipped its hand in its November 15 editorial, when it stressed the importance of covering this story in a "carefully modulated" way.

Last September we received an interesting call from a man who described himself as a black college professor. He called in response to Thomas Fleming's September Perspective, the essay in which the charges against King were mentioned and which engendered the October 5 letter from Jon Westling. Our caller said two things. First, that if we had evidence that King was indeed a plagiarist, then we should publish it forthwith, which we assured him we were in the process of doing. Second, he stated that if the charges proved to be true, then he would propose to his colleagues that the name of the hall his college had named in honor of Mr. King be immediately changed. Lecturing about academic standards in "Martin Luther King Hall" would be the height of hypocrisy and an insult to his college, he said.

Such painful honesty is apparently beyond the capacity of most academics, administrators, and American journalists.

—Theodore Pappas

**WHEN** NEA CHAIRMAN Frohnmayer announced last September that the funds Congress left to the NEA after taking out a big chunk for

the state arts agencies would from now on be spent on strengthening arts in education, international projects, expanding audiences for the arts, and the infrastructure of the arts, many of us took heart. We thought that lessons had been learned, that in its mysterious way the political process had brought about its own compromise. The other side would be rid of what it did not want, which was "restrictive language," e.g., you may not use federal funds to employ human fetuses in art work or to engage in partisan politics, and the conservative side would get rid of what it did not want, which was the use of federal funds to employ human fetuses in art work or to engage in partisan politics. This miracle, worthy of Solomon, would come about simply because federal funds would be directed toward institutions, rather than individuals, so that no further abuse of tax funds could occur.

But this is not what is happening, and people wiser than this writer were right in insisting that the NEA would go on as before, once the agency had survived its reauthorization. According to recent news, enormous grants have gone to some of those very persons who provoked the outrage to begin with. That is to say, while the disposable budget of the NEA at the national level has been reduced considerably, the money they still have is being used in a manner that is meant to spite and provoke those of us who thought the NEA should focus upon consensus-building projects in which the vast majority of Americans may take pride. Chairman Frohnmayer tells us he will not even carry out the law of Congress, which says that considerations of decency will come into play—even with the limited funds now in hand. The highest priority is therefore going to be assigned to precisely the kinds of programs that earlier created profound offense. The rump-Council, meeting with no quorum, concurs.

The grants to projects offensive to enormous numbers of Americans are defended: the NEA has to support the cutting edge of art. But a government-sponsored cutting edge is implausible and self-serving. This point has been made in the columns of *Chronicles*, and the people who argued against the NEA have been vindicated by Chairman Frohnmayer's justification for his

decision.

Three issues are at stake. First, do conservatives and religious people outside of the left-wing have a right to participate in the shaping of the political consensus? No, as we now hear, we do not have to be listened to. Second, do the centrists in Congress, including Congressmen Williams and Regula, have the right to legislate public policy through accommodation, negotiation, and compromise? No, as we are now told; they can propose, but the NEA administration will dispose. Third, can tax money be spent on the arts that contribute to the general welfare, or will tax funds always end up provoking controversy and outrage? What we are told is that considerations of the social order will not stand in the way of the NEA's use of public funds, and that the NEA insiders will use these funds in any way they well please.

—Jacob Neusner

**WHEN GUNS N ROSES**, the rock group, said they liked being white, the music business fell on them like a ton of discs. But racial music is not always insensitive.

With what *Washington Post* music critic David Mills calls "unprecedented directness," Black Muslim rappers are hitting the charts with records preaching their esoteric doctrines. These include the idea that blacks are the chosen people of God, the only descendants of the real Adam, Shabazz; and that whites are a race of devils created by Mr. Yakoub, a mad scientist who didn't leave the underdone whites in his furnace long enough.

Another group of Muslims in the rap industry, the Five Percent Nation of Islam, holds that blacks are literal gods, but only 5 percent of them know it. Rap, they believe, will spread this gospel.

But there's a problem. White devils are making rap records, too. "Who gave permission to the slave master's son, to come among the gods and try to do the things we've done?" asks Wise Intelligent of the group Poor Righteous Teachers.

That's far from the only white misdeed. Crack, says Grand Puba Maxwell of the group Brand Nubian, comes "in a vial, set up by the devil as

he looks and he smiles." Adds Lord Mustapha: "they injected us with syphilis" and now "they're trying to take us out with the AIDS virus."

The Grand Puba—whom David Mills describes as "having a great sense of humor"—says that white devils are "still causing trouble among the righteous people. Drugs in our community, can't even get a job, poisoning our babies, lying who is God." The answer? "We're going to drop the bomb on the Yakoub crew."

On the latest album from Movement Ex, about which a "listener is likely" to "crack a smile" according to the *Post*'s Mr. Mills, Prince Mustapha asks, "What's with the hippie you worship on the cross? 'Cause Jesus was dark-skinned, not like the painting. Since you're the one who's lying, you must be Satan. A devilish demon savage, scavenger beast. Since you have been, there's been no peace."

In another song, Mustapha notes "You drink eggnog celebrating the holiday of the enemy. I'd shoot Santa Claus if he comes down my chimney."

Jon Shecter, a young white Harvard graduate who edits a rap magazine, told David Mills that although he is sometimes made "uncomfortable" by talk of white devils, "their music moves me. And their message moves me, in a way. I respect them. And I know of so many white kids who feel the same way I do."

These records, on which, as Mustapha says, "My grammar is the hammer, and you are the nail," are distributed by such firms as Columbia, CBS, and Warner.

"The people who run this business," says Paris of San Francisco, "their loyalty is not to themselves, but to the dollar." But we can do business with them, says Wise Intelligent, because the "Powerful Eye of Allah sees Everything." This, he adds, is what the popular African-American greeting "Peace" really means. "They're always watched. No one can ever fool me."

—Llewellyn H. Rockwell

**THE INSENSITIVITY SQUAD** has struck again: this time against a board game and a marching band. Parker Brothers, venerable producer of board games, was recently denounced by the head of the U.S. Small Business

Administration, left-Republican Susan Engeleiter. It seems that its new game, *Careers for Girls*, for ages 8-12, lists six "careers" for the young players to select, and Engeleiter detects a strong sexist "wrong message to young girls." For among the careers are such outlandish activities as "schoolteacher" and "supermom," and there is not a single listing for "astronaut" or "business executive." Furthermore, "there are no careers requiring physical daring or strength." All in all, she complains, the game shows an "insensitivity [there it is again!] to modern realities."

All right, how about this for the six careers: weightlifter, heavyweight champion, President of the United States, lion tamer, football lineperson, and sumo wrestler? Ready, girls?

Brought under government interdict, Parker Brothers did what is generally done in these situations: run for the protection of a praetorian guard of the supposedly oppressed group. Parker spokeswoman Patricia McGovern

stressed that "the game is purely for entertainment" (What? Since when are games supposed to "entertain"? Aren't all activities merely a search for the "politically correct"?), and pointed out that the game was designed by a woman, the art was produced by a woman, and the manager was a woman, so that everyone "involved with bringing this game to market is female."

Will that be enough to get Parker Brothers off the hook? What if it changes its name to Parker Sisters?

Then we have the newly proclaimed sin of "inappropriate laughter." At a football game last November, the famously rowdy Stanford marching band, which in the past had gotten away with urinating on the playing field and with the Flying Genitalia formation, at last "went too far." Which ethnic, racial, or religious group did they offend? None of the above; they committed a hate crime by laughing about the plight of the spotted

owl, in a game with spotted owl-ridden University of Oregon. Stanford athletic director Alan Cummings promptly suspended the band for several games, and may leave the band at home next year, as requested by Oregon's director of athletics. As the band's manager explained, the spotted owl's plight is a subject Oregonians "can't joke about."

Now see here: in the old days, Americans joked about the Great Depression, they joked about the war, they joked about Hitler. If we can't joke about the spotted owl, are we still a "free country"?

—Murray Rothbard

**VALERIO MAGRELLI**, whose poetry is found in this issue, was born in Rome in 1957. He studied literature and philosophy, an intertwining of interests that one sees reflected in his mature poetic style. Magrelli began publishing in 1977. From the beginning Magrelli's work was recognized as especially accomplished, and many critics consider him the most promising poet of his generation. A trained linguist, Magrelli has been quite active as a translator, publishing in both periodicals and books his versions mainly from the French (Verlaine, Stendhal, Mallarmé, Valéry, Vian, and others). Magrelli has published two collections of his own poetry, each of which has won a major award. The Premio Mondello went to *Ora serrata retinae* in 1980, and *Nature e venature* (1987) received the highly prestigious Premio Viareggio. He lives in Rome with his wife and young son.

Magrelli's poetry combines cool intellectualism with intense but understated emotion. The exceptional beauty of Magrelli's poetry comes from both the stunning originality of his metaphors and the subtle counterpoint he creates between secrecy and revelation. While there is usually a touch of dry humor in his poems, the subjects they discuss—love, loss, creativity, and introspection—are never trivialized. In an utterly modern way Magrelli has revived the traditional dialectic between body and soul, intellect and emotion, desire and achievement that has distinguished Italian lyric poetry since Dante and Petrarch.

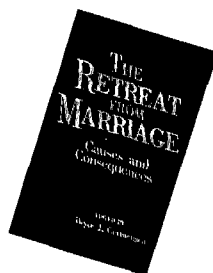
—Dana Gioia

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Edited by Bryce Christensen

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# Principalities & Powers

by Samuel Francis

The presidential games of 1992 are well more than a year away, but would-be Republican gladiators are already measuring George Bush for a quick thrust in the belly. Their plans may be premature. Though the President came close to wrecking his party by breaking his promise against new taxes and may yet make a fool of himself and his country abroad, he is no more seriously wounded than Ronald Reagan was in 1982 at a corresponding low point in his own presidency. Nevertheless, whatever happens between now and the moment when the political swordplay begins, the games these days seem to produce little more than yawns from the bored and largely passive citizen-spectators. Barely 50 percent of qualified voters bothered to cast ballots in 1988, and the illusion that it really matters who sits in the White House is gradually dissipating.

One reason for the indifference to which slicko is crowned as the nation's chief executive is that the *de jure* office of the American presidency has become about as effective an instrument of power as Roseanne Barr would be on a basketball court. Swollen far beyond its natural proportions by a century's steady diet of the political equivalent of double cheeseburgers and hot fudge sundaes, the presidency today no longer consists of the individual who sits in the Oval Office and who spends most of his day in harmless ceremonial. Today the presidency in fact is composed of pretty much the same sort of invisible munchkins who manage the corporate economy and the labyrinthine caverns of the dominant culture.

It is they, and not the occupants of formal office or the legal owners of corporate stock, who determine how, when, and in what direction the obese apparatus of power and wealth will waddle. The man in the grey flannel White House today confines most of his labors to munching cookies with visiting dignitaries, supervising Cabinet klatches, making periodic forays into the wilderness beyond the White House gates to receive honorary doctorates, and threatening foreign tyrants with visitations of globalist brimstone if

they don't forthwith release whatever Yanks have been foolish enough to wander into their precincts. There is no doubt that the chief executive still performs such meaningless rituals of state, but the irrelevance of the President to real power emerges clearly whenever word of an Important Decision leaks out.

A Cabinet secretary is fired, a Supreme Court justice nominated, a treaty concluded, a law proposed, or a war begun, and no one, from the humblest chimney sweep to the most plugged-in pundit in Georgetown, ever imagines that the President had anything to do with it. Maybe it was the White House chief of staff, the secretary of state, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the First Lady, the President's pollsters, the President's astrologer, or one or another of the castrated intellectuals who decorate the White House court who actually had the idea and guided it through the paper-clip jungle to the President's desk. But nobody thinks that the President himself conceived the idea, planned the strategy, or performed the work that made the decision real.

Of course, that doesn't mean he escapes the blame if the act of statecraft blows up in his and the nation's face. One real function the President still retains is to serve as national scapegoat for the crimes, failures, weaknesses, and follies of the executive bureaucracy. The contemporary President of the United States does not resemble an emperor of Rome in its last days so much as he does one of the "divine kings" that the anthropologist James George Frazer wrote about. Chosen by the local priesthood to reign for a year of splendor and indulgence in every known human appetite, the holy monarch would eventually be pitched into a volcano or have his entrails ripped out to divert the wrath of whatever vengeful gods the Third World of antiquity adored. But of course, during his year of opulence, there was never any question of letting his divine majesty actually run things. His only function was to vegetate in sacerdotal luxury until the dread day of atonement fell.

The engorgement of the American presidency by the managerial priest-

hood of the executive branch means that it has ceased to make much practical difference which individual or party holds the office. A new President may bring new lapdogs to court and his wife may order new wallpaper for the White House bathrooms, but the real rulers, invisible and immovable, never even flutter their eyelids when the body politic twitches in the quadrennial presidential election.

It follows that conservatives, who have dreamed and drooled at the prospect of placing one of their own in the Oval Office ever since Herbert Hoover was defenestrated, ought to find better things to do with themselves. In 1980 they actually thought their millennium had arrived, and indeed Mr. Reagan was about as reasonable a facsimile of the conservative ideal as the political chemistry of the late 20th century could brew. But, while Mr. Reagan occasionally voiced inspiring sentiments, made a few good appointments, and even presided over an at least temporary economic recovery, not even the Gipper succeeded in staying the course of governmental enlargement. When he left office, the Department of Education was even bigger than when he entered, despite his promise to abolish both it and the Energy Department, and he even added an entirely new appendage in the form of the Department of Veterans Affairs to the already bloated federal trunk.

Yet the presidency throughout American history has always served as the spearhead by which a new elite has broken through the intermediary institutions in which an old elite is lodged. In the First Republic of the early 19th century, the main social conflict was between, on the one hand, northern commercial and industrial interests that sought to use the federal government to help fill their own pockets and "develop" the rest of the country and, on the other, Southern agrarian interests, which, to be sure, made use of Washington to protect slavery as much as possible through the Constitution and the Fugitive Slave Law but in general had every reason to keep centralized power as limited as possible. Once the representatives of the South-

ern interests had seceded in 1861, their rivals in the north saw their opportunity and grabbed it.

Lincoln's presidency (and perhaps Secretary of War Edwin Stanton as much as the President himself) served as the icepick that broke through the crystallized institutions of the First Republic and allowed the waters of an emerging bourgeois elite to flow toward political, economic, and cultural control. Once the bourgeoisie had won, it had little use for an expanded presidency, and it ruled largely through its own intermediary institutions in Congress, the local jurisdictions that controlled Congress, and the informal, decentralized, and private apparatus that the elite constructed in small towns, private corporations, and state and local governments across the country.

The corruption and incompetence that ensued from bourgeois dominance is known to every schoolboy, though somehow the connection between the excesses of the Gilded Age and the crushing of the South is never noticed. In any case, by the early 20th century, a new elite of rising technocratic and managerial forces was challenging the bourgeois order and making use of Progressivist ideology to discredit bourgeois institutions.

Of course, they saw in the presidency a convenient instrument by which they could centralize power and undermine the hegemony of their bourgeois rivals. Progressivist ideologues like the *New Republic's* Herbert Croly looked on the Lincoln presidency as a

model for their own revolution, and with the two Roosevelts and Woodrow Wilson they succeeded in entrenching themselves in the vast regulatory woodwork of the executive branch that they built. A half century later the dominant managerial class is still there and is still dependent on the imperial presidency, and, like the bourgeois elite that it displaced, has also become corrupt, self-serving, incompetent, and oligarchic.

For a brief moment in the 1970's it looked as though its power was being effectively challenged by yet another rising social force of Middle Americans, and both Richard Nixon's "New American Majority" and the "New Right" of the later part of the decade seemed about to oust the incumbent managerial elite. In the first half of the Reagan presidency, however, it became clear that it wouldn't happen. It couldn't happen then, for two reasons.

First, Mr. Reagan and his supporters never developed an alternative base of cultural power by which they could legitimize their efforts. They did not do so mainly because they never understood clearly what they represented — not a clean-up squad sent in to mop up the mess left by Jimmy Carter but a new set of engineers and architects who were supposed to tear down the old structure and build anew. Hence, Mr. Reagan and most of his advisers, wordsmiths, and satellites continued to justify their policies in terms acceptable to the dominant culture and the interests it serves. Mr. Reagan continually invoked Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, and the supply-side proselytizers and resident anticommunists were always summoning from the vast deep the spirits of John F. Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, and Henry Jackson, while everyone rushed to prostrate himself before the chief deity of the liberal pantheon, the Divine Doctor himself, Martin Luther King, Jr. The Reagan administration presented itself simply as a corrective to liberal errors in navigation, not as a new ship charting a new course. In the end, the Middle American radicalism to which Mr. Reagan had appealed in his early political career and in his 1980 campaign proved to be too immature, too poorly understood by the Gipperites, and too lacking in an independent cultural and political consciousness to serve as the

chart by which the new course could be planned.

Secondly, any effort to raise Middle American consciousness for a new cultural identity and a power base resting on it was thwarted by the manipulative genius of the incumbent elite. By inserting cultural managers like William Bennett into the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Education Department, by placing corporate mandarins like Donald Regan and George Shultz in charge of economic and foreign policy, by letting George Bush and his friends wield more influence than they had a right to, and by relying on such silver-throated men of the people as Howard Baker and Robert Dole to run the Senate for him, Mr. Reagan ensured that nothing he did would ever seriously threaten the foundations of the ruling groups he had campaigned against. His chosen lieutenants and the bureaucratic morlocks who labored beneath the surface of visible politics simply aborted any inclinations to radical action that might have stirred in the administration's womb.

The emasculation of the Reagan presidency before it ever reached political puberty was, in retrospect, predictable. The underlying radical impulses of Reaganism were simply too embryonic to be able to take and exercise power. Nor, for all the disenchantment with George Bush and his court, have they grown up very much since Mr. Reagan departed.

In effect, what this means is that genuinely radical conservative forces cannot expect to accomplish much simply by winning the White House. Political power in the absence of an alternative social and cultural power base will inevitably be swallowed by the forces that remain dominant in society and culture and that are particularly dense in the presidency, the institutional heart of the regime. If the right really wants to win power, it will have to create that kind of counterculture before it can expect to gain much from electoral glad-handing and horse-trading. Once it does so and is willing to mobilize its countercultural base against the incumbent elite and its institutional loci of power, it will find the presidency the natural instrument for a new Middle American revolution. ◊

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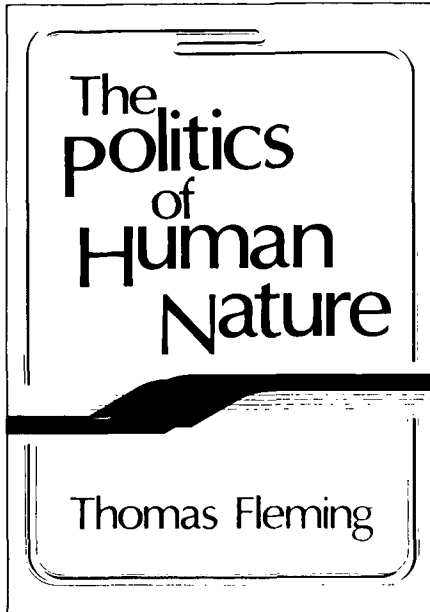
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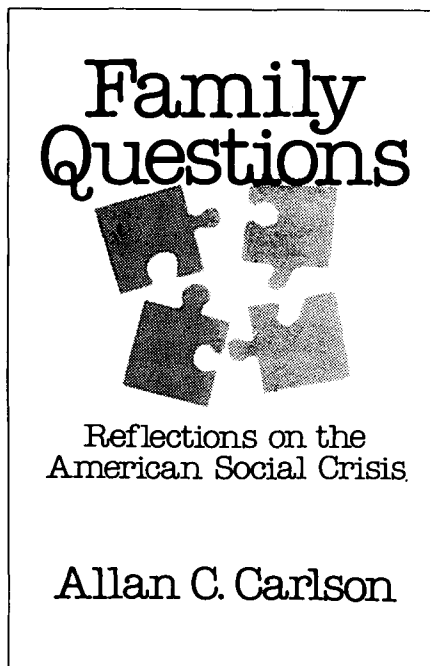


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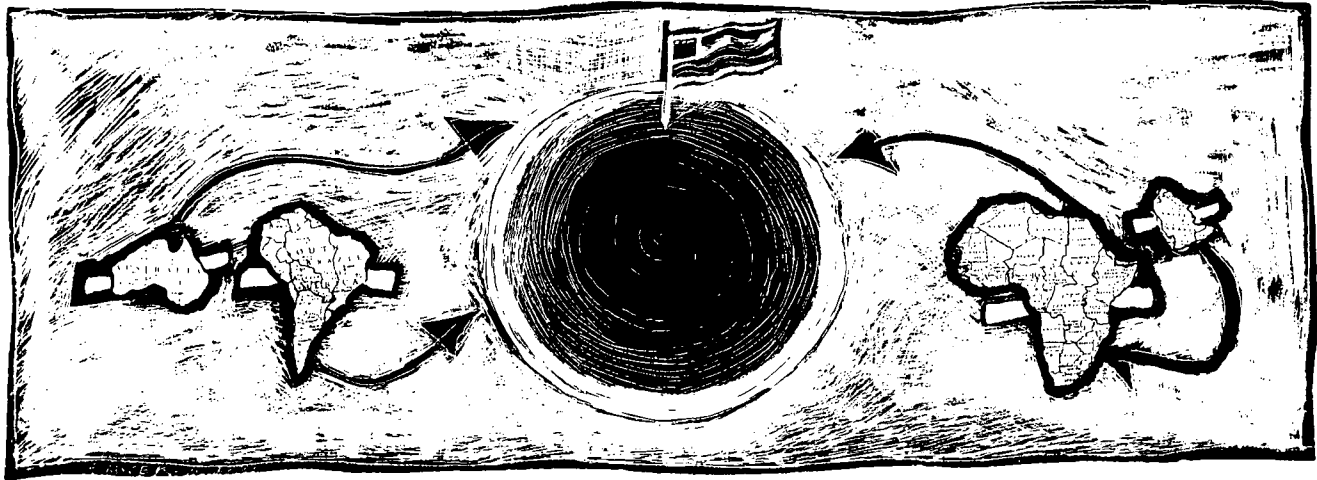
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Anna Myreck-Wodecki

## Surviving in the New World Order

by Thomas Fleming

George Bush chose a risky moment for launching his New World Order. World stock markets have reacted to the vicissitudes of war with all the stability of a manic-depressive who won't take his medicine when he's feeling up and doesn't see the point of taking it when he's down. The mere rumors of war were enough to send oil prices up and stock prices down, but the brilliant success of the first day's air attack caused an ebullient rebound in world stock markets and lowered oil prices by \$10 a barrel. However, continued Iraqi resistance wreathed in the black smoke of a pipeline fire was enough to send the bears back into hibernation.

War is probably not the best medicine for an ailing economy that has just been hit by bank failures and tax increases. The money industry in the United States has been on the verge of crisis for some time. FDIC's decision to take over the Bank of New England in January came hard on the heels of the temporary closing of Rhode Island Credit Unions, bankrupted by the failure of their insurer. If one can believe Ralph Nader and other "consumer advocates," many large insurance companies are on the brink of ruin. Worst of all, the savings and loan industry, as a reward for its follies and chicaneries, is being bailed out by American taxpayers whose children and grandchildren will have to pay for the mistakes of incompetent regulators and corrupt liberal senators, yea unto the fourth generation. (One had always heard that Senator Cranston, impeccable anti-American leftist that he is, despised wealth, especially the wealth of American plutocrats, but it always turns out that socialists so firmly believe what they say about capitalist greed that they are determined to get in on the action.)

The causes of these emergencies are varied and complex. Some institutions have followed the Donald Trump model of investing heavily into real estate markets on the way up,

only to discover that elevators can move in more than one direction. Others, in their rapacity for Arab petrodollars, showered billions of dollars on Third World countries, who used the money to pay the interest on their already massive debt. The general opinion is that the international American banks, Chase Manhattan, Hanover Trust, Citibank, Bank of America, *et al.*, will never see a penny of the principal owed by Brazil and Mexico, but with the usurious rates of interest, premiums, and penalties they're charging, it is a situation they can live with—so long as there is not a run on the bank.

But if there were, the nearly bankrupt FDIC will be sure to bail them out on the principle of "too big to fail," which means apparently that the bankers who go into government service are committed to saving their own industry's bacon. In the case of the Bank of New England, FDIC Director Seidman decided to guarantee all accounts, including those over the \$100,000 limit.

On the other hand, when a small bank in Harlem failed, it was only under pressure that the FDIC agreed to settle on 50 cents on the dollar for accounts over \$100,000—precisely the offer made by Mr. Potter to the depositors of the Bailey Building and Loan.

Of course, Mr. Seidman's defense is that the Bank of New England is important to the New England economy, but the real difference is that major banks are players in the national and international money game; a black community bank is not, and it is the stability and security of international markets that must be preserved.

When the oilman-turned-international-avenger speaks of a New World Order, he clearly has in mind something a little less ambitious than world conquest but more grandiose than the mixed assortment of multinational corporations, international banks, and U.N. agencies (the IMF and the

World Bank, for example) that set the economic agenda for most of the world. For years, we have been hearing complaints about America's failure to keep up with Germany and Japan, and this country's slow decline into a second-rate power seemed assured. However, once we establish a permanent military presence in the Gulf and after we take on a few other dictators who have the misfortune to rule a country with strategic assets, we will be in an excellent position to bully the axis powers.

There are one or two possible flaws in the new imperial strategy. Most obviously, the Germans and Japanese may refuse to accept the situation. After all, it is our electronic superiority that allowed us to take over Iraqi airspace with some ease, and either Germany or Japan could begin turning some of their technological capacity to what we euphemistically like to call defense.

America's renewed bellicosity stems from the eclipse of the Soviet Union as a serious rival. But despite the mess Mr. Gorbachev has made of their moribund command economy, the Soviets are not out of the game. While the good empire was busy restoring emirs and keeping down oil prices, the bad empire was crushing resistance in the Baltic states and cracking down on the press. Was this part of a package deal arrangement: in return for their nominal support against Iraq, we promised—in addition to loans and credits—a free hand within their sphere of influence? Or is Gorbachev's militancy nothing more than the predictable Soviet opportunism? (During the Suez crisis, they moved into Hungary.) It hardly matters, since foreknowledge in such matters is tantamount to responsibility, and we *knew* what the Soviets would do. By itself, the Soviet Union may be in no position to compete with the United States, but they do not have to go it alone. Thomas Molnar has been arguing for some time that the U.S.S.R. and Germany have every incentive for cooperation. Even in the short run, a German-Russian alliance could prove fatal to our imperial euphoria.

Quite apart from the prospects for American hegemony, the New World Order may not prove to be a blessing for most of the world's inhabitants. Just as nationalism grows at the expense of lesser allegiances—localisms and provincialisms—so internationalism (always a code word for imperialism) battens upon a diet of national loyalty. In the economic sphere, the internationalists are driven by the vision of a world in which every human being is bound to every other by links of production, consumption, and exchange. It is international capitalism's answer to the great chain of being. At the top stand the international corporate giants, and at the bottom are GM assembly line workers or Mexican peasants who have only recently made the transition from subsistence farming to growing cash crops for Green Giant.

Terms like "the free market" or even "capitalism" hardly seem applicable to the international economy. Most of the multinationals have learned how to manipulate governments to their own advantage. ITT—with its record of collaboration with Hitler, gifts to political parties, and attempts to overthrow unfriendly regimes (ITT allegedly offered the CIA money to help get rid of Allende)—is only the most glaring example. And where the corporation cannot influence a government, it may choose to pursue its

own international policy, often at the expense of the country in which it is chartered.

The most obvious examples are the many businesses in Europe and the United States that found methods—illegal as well as legal—of selling technology to the U.S.S.R. Less obvious are the political entanglements of international banking studied by Benjamin J. Cohen in his Council on Foreign Relations study, *In Whose Interest*. An internationalist to the core, Cohen still cites case after case of conflict between the foreign policies of the United States and U.S. banks.

In the case of Poland, the State Department encouraged the banks to make loans as a means of gaining leverage over the liberalizing regime of Edward Gierk. The real effect of these loans, however, was to sink the Polish economy under a burden of debt. When General Jaruzelski eventually cracked down on Solidarity and imposed martial law, the U.S. government had to balance the strategic needs of its own policy against the banks' desire for repayment. The solution was tough talk and a little-publicized rescheduling of the Polish loans that put \$344 million of American taxpayers' money into the coffers of such major banks as Citibank, Chase Manhattan, Morgan Guaranty, and Bank of America.

A fitting allegory for our predicament is the evolution of money from hard currency into Eurodollars. What, exactly, are Eurodollars? For real information, ask an economist, but so far as an economic illiterate can gather, Eurodollars function as a sort of offshore international currency that allow a Dutch or Japanese investor to transact business in a French or German bank, even though the business may involve securities and currencies from Britain or the United States. Actually, the term Eurodollars is misleading, since the system, so far from being limited to Europe, is a worldwide attempt—and a successful one, at that—to get around all the petty restrictions that nation-states impose upon financial transactions.

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This is a long way from what simple people have usually regarded as wealth, much less money. Before the invention of money, wealth consisted of property and possessions: arable land and the crops that could be grown, the flocks and herds that could be raised upon it; as well as useful works of craft and art. The beauty, usefulness, and scarcity of precious metals led gradually to their use as one means of measuring wealth, and steps were eventually taken—in Lydia and Greek Ionia—of stamping fixed quantities of gold, silver, and the gold-silver alloy of electrum with a symbol indicating their weight or worth.

A semiotician might say that this early money—and indeed all hard currency—is money as *sign*, that is to say, so much weight in gold or silver indicates so many jars of oil, so many bushels of grain. At first, anyone with a sufficient supply of precious metals could coin money, since it was worth nothing more nor less than the weight of the metal. Temples, with the constant stream of offerings pouring into their treasuries, were among the first mints, but it did not take the rulers of Greek city-states very long to figure out that it was in their interest to claim a monopoly on creating money.

Precious metals in general and money in particular have many advantages over flocks and jars of wine, not the least of which is the ease with which they can be accumulated and multiplied. In a pre-monetary economy, power and wealth is a very clumsy and material affair: a thousand armed retainers who can be fed and clothed on the lord's estates, so much tribute in oil or servants owed from tributary villages. (The mainland Greek terms *obol* and *drachma* are conventionally derived from words meaning a "spit" and a "handful of spits.") But with money comes a more efficient system of trade and the chance for breeding money by lending it at interest (the Greek word for interest means "offspring").

It may be no coincidence that the introduction of money is followed very quickly by a political innovation, both in Lydia and Greece, that was known as tyranny, after the Lydian name for this sort of ruler. The unwieldy old family-based monarchies, chieftanships, and aristocracies were replaced by a new, more efficient style of rule that depended on wealth, a paid bodyguard, and the power to make popular decisions that were contrary to the customary usages of the land. Conservative and reactionary Sparta, it should be noted, opposed both tyrants and money, clinging to its cumbersome iron weights.

Not long after the rulers established their monopoly on money, they began to use it politically. When Periclean Athens embarked on its policy of conquest and empire, the Athenians tried to impose their money as the only legal tender in the Aegean. Standardization of money was not necessarily a bad idea, since the different weight standards of the city-states must have complicated trade considerably. Of course, coins had greater value in their home territory than elsewhere—if only to cover the cost of striking. There was also the temptation to inflate the money supply by debasing the coinage. However, so long as other coinages were in competition, these dishonest measures could only succeed in devaluing the state's currency—and its credit. For this reason most Greek cities jealously protected the value of their coinage. The Romans did the same, and much of the Byzantine Empire's success was due to its hard money policy; when they were forced to debase the *solidus*, their political as well as their economic power were doomed.

Ancient money was always concrete, and the coins were often things of beauty. It was as if the Greeks could not clearly distinguish the hypothetical exchange value of a coin from its intrinsic quality as a work of art. In modern times, new and abstract forms of money have been devised: letters of credit and bank certificates promising to pay the bearer so much in gold. But even when most advanced nations were still sticking to a gold standard for their paper money, banks and governments could issue notes based not only on their

gold reserves but also on money they were owed.

The inflationary tendencies of flexible gold standards and fractional reserve banking were pointed out long ago by Ludwig von Mises. From there it is a significant but not a giant step to the creation of fiat money, which stands not for any amount of gold or flocks or any other form of material wealth. It is money not as sign but as symbol, something to be pursued for its own sake, bred for its own sake, a sort of Ponzi scheme in which we are continually taking each other in as suckers that will someday be repaid by more promises to take in more suckers.

Standing behind all fiat money is the bayonet: the power and majesty of the state and the conviction that, come what may, the state can settle its accounts. On occasion, bankers learn that this is not always so, when they make loans to Weimar Germany, Poland, or Mexico. But in recent years, at least, it has not been the faith and credit of Poland and Mexico that back their loans and support their seashell currencies. It is the United States and the international economy in which U.S. interests dominate.

We began this *1066 and All That* monetary history with Eurodollars because of their challenge to the sovereign interests of the United States in the conduct of its foreign policy, but there are even broader implications for sovereignty. If it is true that the creation of money (as opposed to bank notes redeemable in money) has generally been the exclusive prerogative of the state, then—setting aside historical complications like the early American reliance on Spanish coins or occasional coinages by banks—we can see that money and sovereignty have been to a large extent coextensive. (The rulers of the Athenian and Roman Empires certainly thought so.) If a new international currency has really emerged in the past twenty-five years, then perhaps the New World Order for which we are shedding our blood is an already accomplished fact, and the most paranoid fantasies of the John Birch Society were only the faintest glimmerings of the real nightmare: a world order brokered by the great internationalists, men of the stripe of Robert McNamara, James Baker, ARAMCO executives, and David Rockefeller; a world in which the great nation-states, after sucking the juice out of regional and state communities, are now to be themselves drained and absorbed into the higher order of the global economy.

It is easy to see what the executives of multinational corporations and international banks get out of the new order, but what are the rewards for the shopkeepers, small farmers, and factory workers—for the bulk of humanity at the end of the great chain of capital? Adam Smith would have said that foreign trade generally benefits all the parties concerned. Division of labor and specialization of skills creates markets for new goods that feed the human appetite for novelty. When we buy Japanese cars and video equipment, they use the money to buy houses in San Francisco and golf courses in Iowa, and everyone benefits economically.

In a more philosophical vein, Smith might point out that man is not self-sufficient and is formed by nature to live in society. This argument goes back to Aristotle, who traced the development of human society to the incompleteness of male and female and the impossibility of living successfully

even at the familial or village level. There is a natural evolution, he said, from couples to villages to states, a process leading to a condition of autarky, or self-sufficiency, which is the fulfillment of human nature. The internationalists, in one sense, are only extending this reasoning to the global level.

But prudence is the great political virtue, and while it may not be possible to form a general rule determining how great is too great, neither extreme—isolation and globalism—seems consistent with human nature. When Aristotle spoke of the human need for autarky, he did not imagine a series of anthills in which all the workers performed their individual tasks with automatic obedience. In general, the Greeks were suspicious of specialization, because of the damage it inflicted upon the human character. Their ideal gentleman was a man in superb physical condition who enjoyed sports and hunting; he had a sufficient income for his purposes but expected to manage his estates and household; he took an active part in the politics of his community and, when called upon, risked his life in its defense; he knew enough of Homer and the other poets to be able to draw instruction from them and could sing and play a musical instrument. If he were, like Plato and Aristotle, intellectually inclined, he wrote on a variety of topics—ethics, politics, literary theory, and the sciences, because an exclusive concentration on one discipline, mental as well as physical, narrowed a man. In other words, a free man was an independent man who could, at a pinch, provide for most of his own needs, even if he was occasionally served by “professional” poets, musicians, and speech-writers.

Land, of course, was the primary source of wealth, and a self-reliant farmer clear of debt is a man who does not worry about a boss’s good opinion nor look to a tyrant for handouts. The same can be true of any man whose income is largely under his control, but what proportion of working people today can reasonably claim independence of the Johnny Paycheck “You can take this job and shove it” type?

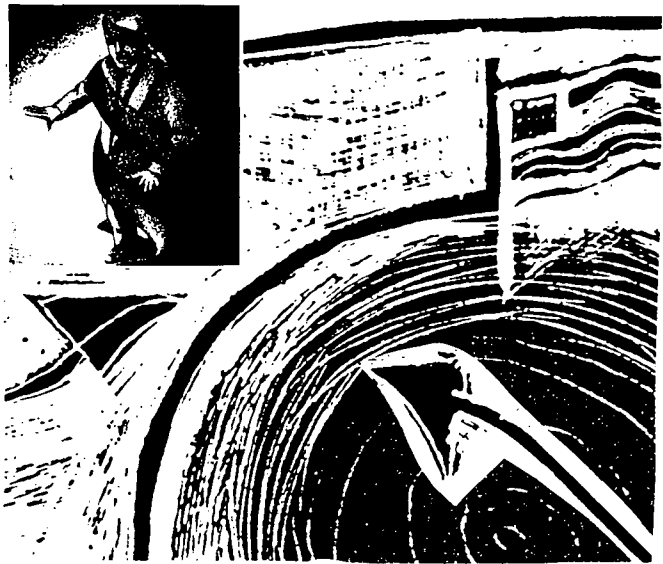
The criticism of big capital has come from two sources. Marxists have accused capitalism of destroying all the social and communal bonds between men and replacing them with the “cash nexus,” but in the 19th century such criticisms were more frequently made in Britain and America by Tories and conservatives. When Walter Scott saw the effects of industrialization on northern England, he prophesied divine vengeance against the men responsible. While the Whig liberals were taking refuge in the iron doctrines of utility and laissez-faire, the Tories were investigating the conditions of women and children working seven days a week in the mines. On a deeper level, the English Romantics and Southern Agrarians (including Richard Weaver and most recently Wendell Berry) deplored the subjugation of human nature to the machine and to money. Human beings were created to breed horses and cattle, not money.

In America, George Fitzhugh based his apology for slavery on the palpable evidence that slaves were better housed and better fed than the so-called “free” workers in Northern factories. And while the researches of Eugene Genovese and the authors of *Time on the Cross* tend to confirm Fitzhugh’s analysis, the nub of the question is not strictly economic. A factory worker may, today, work less and earn more than most independent farmers; he may be

able to afford electronic luxuries undreamed of by the richest plutocrats of a generation ago. His health and welfare—and those of his family—are cared for by insurance, pension plans, and Social Security, but there is one thing he does not and can never have, and that is liberty, because he is nothing more than an *employee*, a tool at the disposition of other men.

Unlike the slaves of the ancient world or the plantation system, the modern wage-slave can quit and go to work for another company, but for the most part this is simply to change one master for another. He can also vote, send his children to government schools, and attend “the church of his choice” (as if faith were nothing more than a whim, at best a rational preference), but these are only rights without responsibilities, and it is responsibility that defines the character of the free citizen.

The picture is, at this point in our history, somewhat overdrawn. There is a tradition of personal independence in the U.S., deriving from our experiences as farmers, shopkeepers, and independent tradesmen and craftsmen. Many blue-collar workers preserve important vestiges of independence: truck drivers, carpenters, plumbers, electricians can all put their confidence in their skill, going from contract to contract without acquiring the habits of servility. Some factory workers can maintain their sense of liberty by looking upon their jobs as a 40-hour commitment willingly undertaken for the sake of their families. Even the unions, which have decayed into little more than interest groups, originally promoted the worker’s sense of worth and dignity.



But the pressures all run in the opposite direction. An independent craftsman or the owner of a small repair business not only has to worry about how to evade the unremitting scrutiny of government agencies and tax collectors, but must also provide for the health and education of his children in a society where the costs of health care and higher education are rising more rapidly than even a plumber’s wages. The small farmer or the owner of a neighborhood garage is now in the position of a masterless

man in the early Middle Ages, and there is a strong temptation to seek refuge under the protection of a Japanese-style corporation. What a relief it would be to let the company worry about your future.

Unfortunately, the international economic order does not often provide the level of security offered by Toyota or Mitsubishi. Even the U.S. corporations with long-standing policies on job security will give them up when the choice is retrenchment or extinction. For confirmation, ask any of the several thousand recently fired employees of Control Data Corporation.

When American business was substantially bound to the continent (as in the 1950's), a man's job might be precarious enough, since his future depended on powerful political and economic forces within the United States. However, now that economic performance depends more and more on events in Japan and Western Europe, it is increasingly difficult even to imagine the strategies and policies, the bumbles and boondoggles that can lead to recession and unemployment. Under these circumstances, a man might be excused for putting his head down, concentrating on his day-to-day tasks, and hoping that someone will take care of him if all goes wrong, but he is less of a man if he does.

Welfare dependents and the servile tools of international business are not the stuff out of which empires are made. Is this the explanation for the Pentagon's reliance on technological wizardry and the gloating early reports on the success of our air attacks? America, with its 250 million people, gigantic GNP, and overwhelming superiority in military hardware and personnel, is the only remaining superpower in the world. One would have thought it a small matter to take on a Third World country with an area the size of California and a population less than New York's. But in the inflated rhetoric of George Bush and his admirers in the

press, a petty Arab thug is blown up into another Hitler, Iraq into Germany, and the air strikes on Baghdad another D-Day.

The upwelling popular support for the war demonstrates that most Americans have their hearts in the right place. They don't like bullies and they trust their leaders enough to believe that they would not be dragging us into a war, if there were not vital interests at stake. As Metternich said of the Germans, our hearts are always sound; it is our heads that get led astray.

As laudable as this resurgent patriotism is, it cannot justify either the bullying tone of public spokesmen nor the rising tide of anti-Arab sentiment. It is as if we cannot fight a war without first degrading the enemy people, demonizing their leaders, and trumpeting our own virtues and victories like a rooster on a dunghill. The only conclusion to draw from our embarrassing self-congratulation is that this nation is not ready to assume the responsibilities of empire even under the pleasant guise of a New World Order, which President Bush now describes (on January 23) as the "rule of law" imposed upon the world—a rule of law that presupposes a sovereign power capable of enforcing it.

When the Romans imposed their rule of law upon the decadent nations of the East and on the savage nations of Europe, the Italian peasantry were still a vigorous people eager to take risks and confident of Rome's destiny. But even without practicing imperialism abroad, we already have the characteristics of a bloated and decadent empire, groaning under the weight of an arrogant bureaucracy and torn by ethnic dissensions. Rome's soldiers and administrators, even provincials whose fathers had learned to speak Latin late in life, could look back on the great saga of Roman myth and history as a story that shaped their present experiences. But we, at the very moment we are embarking upon our own adventure of conquest, teach our children nothing but counter-myths about the racist and sexist oppression exercised by white, Anglo-Saxon Christians in America. Is anyone, black or white, Jew or Christian, ready to die for cultural diversity?

Other decadent empires have attempted to use war as a means for restoring their self-confidence. Paul Kennedy, in taking the *Wall Street Journal* to task for its jingoism, offered the analogy of Spain's disastrous conquests under Philip IV. Like the United States in the 1990's, Spain was riddled with domestic difficulties. Kennedy concludes his analysis with a warning: "If the U.S. wishes to recover its 'reputation,' it might begin by repairing its inner cities, public education, crumbling infrastructure, and multiple social needs, at the same time resisting the temptation to follow the path of Spanish grandees."

Perhaps an even more ominous parallel is the Byzantine Empire's successful wars against Persia in the early seventh century. Heraclius reconquered Syria, Egypt, and Palestine and brought the Persians to their knees. The Byzantine exultation was short-lived. They had not only strained their resources, but in eliminating their competitor they had created a power vacuum into which the abhorrent forces of nature rushed from Arabia to fill. By the time of his death in 641, Heraclius had witnessed the Arab conquest not only of Egypt and Syria but of Persia itself. The rest, as George Bush would say, is just history. 

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Seven Poems  
*by Valerio Magrelli*  
*Translated by Dana Gioia*

1.  
Especially in weeping  
the soul reveals  
its presence  
and through secret pressure  
changes sorrow into water.  
The first budding of the spirit  
is in the tear,  
this slow and transparent word.  
Then following this elemental alchemy  
thought turns itself into substance  
as real as a stone or an arm.  
And there is nothing uneasy in the liquid  
except the mineral  
anguish of matter.

2.  
I have finally learned  
how to read the living  
constellation of women  
and men, to trace the lines  
which connect them into figures.  
And now I recognize the hints  
which bind the disorder of the heavens.  
Across this vault designed for thought  
I discern the revolution of the light  
and the wavering of the signs.  
So the day draws to a close  
while I walk  
in the silent garden of glances.

3.  
In the evening when the light is dim,  
I hide in bed and collect  
the silhouettes of reasoning  
which silently run across my limbs.  
It is here I must weave  
the tapestry of thought  
and arranging the threads of my self  
design my own figure.  
This is not work  
but a kind of workmanship.  
First out of paper, then from the body.  
To provoke thought into form,  
moulded according to a measure.  
I think of a tailor  
who is his own fabric.

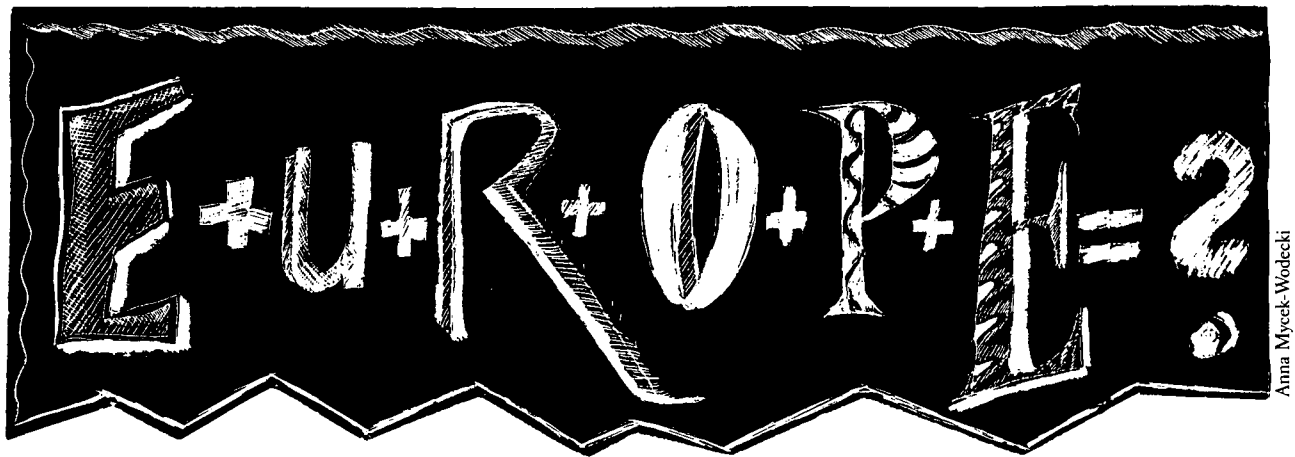
4.  
Every evening, bent over the bright  
garden of pages,  
I gather the fruits of the day  
and assemble them. Lined up,  
the thoughts run in parallel rows,  
the trails of shrewd grafting.

My life is bound  
to this frugal harvest,  
these humble, everyday commodities.  
There is no logic in taking  
the dry fruits or flowers. The only reason,  
which may suffice, is in this spontaneous  
and plant-like secretion of an idea.  
The slow stirrings of the troubled earth  
which conceives it. The kitchen  
with its plain companions.

5.  
He slides the pen  
across the groin of the page,  
and silently the writing assembles itself.  
This sheet has the geometric borders  
of an African state in which  
parallel lines set the dunes in order.  
I am drawing now  
while telling this  
which in the telling takes its shape.  
It is as if a cloud  
arrived to take  
the form of a cloud.

6.  
Ten poems written in one month  
is not much even if this one  
will become the eleventh.  
Not even the subjects differ greatly  
rather there is a single subject  
whose subject is the subject, just like now.  
This is to say how much  
remains here of these pages —  
and knocks but cannot enter  
nor even has to. Writing  
is not a mirror, rather  
the rough-surfaced glass of a shower  
on which the body falls to pieces  
and only its shadow shows through  
indistinct but real.  
And the one who washes reveals nothing  
but his own gestures.  
Therefore what purpose is there  
in looking beyond the watermark  
in case I am a counterfeiter  
and the watermark alone is my work.

7.  
In summer, like the theaters, I close up.  
Thought flies away from me and gets lost,  
the billboard goes blank,  
the air is warm,  
the table stacked with fruit.



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

## Europe Is Not What It Seems

by Thomas Molnar

It would be logical for me to say that, returning to the United States after another four months this summer and fall in various countries of Europe, east and west, I found a great many misconceptions about the continent in American media and public opinion. Yet it would not be fair to limit myself to such a remark, because in Europe too such misconceptions are staggering; at least those which are engendered in the east about the west and in the west about the east. This is the more astonishing as these two halves are scheduled to be gradually working out their rapprochement, in order finally to unite. The truth is, however, that such a "unity" is nothing more than a slogan, a magic word that carries two different meanings: the east of Europe regards unity as a method of receiving vast sums from the west, in the form of gifts, investments, joint ventures, and tourism (myriad hotels are being built to receive visitors); the west of Europe regards unity as a means of flooding the east with needed and unneeded merchandise, as a means of making instant and huge profits through investment (there are already guidebooks to this effect).

The negative aspect of these sharp ambitions on both sides is the fear of the other's Machiavellianism, or, more plainly, its tricks. The west, including even Austria, is worried about the new migrants from the impoverished lands: Gypsies from Rumania, black-marketeering Poles, masses of Russians; the east is even more worried that the respective national resources and patrimonies will be bought up by foreign capital under the pretext of "privatization,"

and that "western culture" will invade minds and tastes that have successfully resisted forty years of communism and brainwashing.

This is, then, the rather desolate truth in place of the illusion that East and West Europe wish nothing better than to cooperate and unite. Underneath the politicians' official embraces, old and new fears surface, national jealousies thrive, and among western investors themselves a kind of shark-morality prevails: who can cut a larger slice from the soon-to-be neocolonized east? About 40 percent of Hungary's newspapers are already in the hands of western presslords: Maxwell, Murdoch and the French Hersant. With only 30 percent of the take, the German *Springer Verlag* (Hamburg) is already in the position of vetoing the arrival of French newspapers — or at least delaying them for days (and who wants yesterday's papers?).

These are more than just glimpses of the supposedly happy east/west relations. In Western Europe proper the idea of unity is regressing, although the cause has become so sacred that all lips pay service to the wonderful prospects coming in 1993. Yet the Germans want none of the "union," none of the common currency, and if you look at France or Spain, you readily understand why the Germans are so reluctant and why they will end up dictating the future. France is full of striking workers, students, public employees — and every month a huge foreign trade deficit. Spain is increasingly desolate, its industry retrogressing, its (socialist) government supported by only 29 percent of the population. The Germans, with their skill and know-how, penetrate Spanish economic life like a knife into butter, and they are also mightily present in Eastern Europe (and

*Thomas Molnar's most recent book is The Church, Pilgrim of Centuries, reviewed in this issue.*

Russia), where France is virtually absent.

The long and short of it is that hegemonic Germany does not need a united Europe, and, together with England although for different reasons, Kohl or his successors will systematically torpedo such a construct. Why England, after Margaret Thatcher? Because no matter what Englishman becomes prime minister—tomorrow even Neil Kinnock—he will return to the Thatcherite line. England is not part of the Continent, the Heseltine claim was a political gimmick; truth is, Englishmen detest the Continent, and the opening of the tunnel may even exacerbate this feeling. What we may expect is that the January 1, 1993, deadline for unity will be put off to later, then again and again, until such time that the whole unmanageable mess will be dropped and forgotten. For the past three or four years the notion of unity was a strategy of France to a) prevent German unification, b) prevent Russo-German rapprochement (a new and dreaded Rapallo), and c) tie a relatively weak West Germany to a permanently lame France. This strategy failed at every point, although Mitterrand now puts on a good face—hiding his fury.

Yet, the clowning goes on, and Kohl, Andreotti, and John Major keep smiling at the prospect of unity, hiding their second thoughts, at least as long as Jacques Delors lords it over in Brussels as high commissar of unity. Delors, a cold technocrat and a Christian Democrat to boot (a good mask for deeper layers of Jacobinism, thus ultra-centralization of all powers), is a typical Frenchman in the sense of “either I lead you, or I prevent you from playing the game.” All groups that include the French end up succumbing to this sense of superiority—except the Germans who, when powerful, display a different but just as devastating arrogance. Delors’ mandate as Brussels’ superstar will soon end, and chances are that Belgian Prime Minister Martens will succeed him. This means, since Martens is a Fleming and not a Walloon, that British interests will be better safeguarded than the French, and we may then see an ephemeral alliance between London and Berlin—against Paris. At any rate, the triangular situation does not promise much “unity” but a lot of haggling, which will also be to the detriment of the “small” ones, from Lisbon to Oslo to Athens—not to speak of Eastern Europe, still only interested in getting funds.

This is the happy harmony at the top; among the citizens there is absolutely no enthusiasm for the “commonly shared” Europe. Juan Goytisolo asks in the leading Spanish paper, *El Pais*, just what may be the issue or the tradition on which the nations of Europe would see eye to eye? The common man’s attitude is either complete indifference or indeed fear that he would lose his job to better qualified European “brothers,” or that his little private sphere of life would be invaded by North Africans and Asians. European unity may be efficacious in one area, but it will also breed racial hatred, which is already growing as the laws issued from Brussels clearly advantage the “immigrant” over against the local population. The common man knows he is being sold a bill of goods; his reaction is not yet savage, but his patience is not inexhaustible. A typical reaction by a French shopkeeper: For the time being, we hardly manage to coexist with North Africans, and not at

all when they approach majority in any given *arrondissement* or village; but God only knows what will happen if Germany kicks out its Turkish workers (replaced easily by ex-East Germans), who then merely cross our borders—without a passport.

Although “European unity” is becoming a swear word, the Strasbourg “parliament,” blissfully ignoring popular wishes, has just now voted a resolution turning the future Europe into a “federation.” Federation, confederation, total unity—whatever the label—all people expect the consumer society to continue and even to be further “Americanized.” I said “all expect,” but this is not quite true. In the West, consumerist habits are by now so ingrained that not even confiscatory taxes prevent the citizen from living a life of mindless purchase. In the East, things have not gone that far, because a perhaps majority of citizens value their regained homeland and want to continue their national existence, interrupted for half a century. But inside every East European country there is also a vocal minority—technocrats, liberals, agnostics, pro-capitalists—who want an instant consumer society, to hell with the nation’s past and communal interests. These people publish most of the newspapers and magazines, shape the TV programs, teach at the universities. Many young priests have joined their ranks. Facing this strong minority, there is the usual silent majority, reluctant to disperse the national patrimony in the name of “privatization,” and insistent on, for example, religious instruction in schools. You find the split between Lech Walesa and Adam Michnik, or between Jozsef Antall and Janos Kiss. For the time being, less than a year after liberation from the Soviet nightmare, the forces of tradition are strong enough to win elections for top posts; the zealous brothers from among western bankers and speculators have, however, mounted their financial offensive to put the local liberal Democrats in power. Walesa is the target of scurrilous attacks—and his name stands here as a collective phenomenon.

At any rate, it is hard to imagine that the cause of European unity would resist the innumerable conflicts that are quite natural for Europe, although baffling to Americans. How do you achieve union when, on the one hand, Germany is strong and vital enough to reabsorb in a matter of a few months her eastern provinces, while France is so weak as to want to grant independence to Corsica? How do you achieve union when all the nationality conflicts are ablaze in Eastern Europe, and Russia herself becomes fragmented, each fragment entertaining hostile intentions? No wonder that under the circumstances those who begin to doubt the magic January 1, 1993, are proposing new configurations, not as artificial as Jacobin Jacques Delors’ Robespierrian abstraction. If not pan-European unity, they say, why not regional groupings, as suggested by Italy’s foreign minister, De Michelis, who foresees German hegemony and proposes as a counterweight a line reaching from Barcelona to Trieste, and farther up to Slovenia and Hungary. Others have a Baltic-to-the-Mediterranean axis in mind, reaching as far as Morocco. Skeptics say that one look at the map demonstrates that the northern capitals (and industrial areas) are nearer each other, such as London to Stockholm, than the southern capitals, say from Madrid to Ankara, a line that passes through vast underdeveloped

regions. In other words, it seems that a united Europe would still offer unbeatable advantages to the northern countries over those of the south. Unity would thus mean exploitation not only of Eastern Europe by Western Europe, but of the soft southern underbelly by northern industry.

Mme. Marie-France Garaud, who used to be Pompidou's and Chirac's chief advisor, now admits in *Géopolitique* that unity remains an empty slogan when reality is preparing a continental shift from west to east (including Russia), whether fragmented or unified. There may be in this a historic justice. A united Europe did exist, under the Church's aegis, in the Middle Ages; it was the *christiana respublica*. It broke up around 1500 A.D., when the Turkish invasion detached east from west. During the subsequent centuries the west profited by the Renaissance, the age of discoveries, science and industry, while the east fell into stagnation, devastations, wars, and poverty. "Unity" under these conditions has been a historical misnomer, a mere geographical fact. It appears now that the east is taking its revenge: while Western Europe has nothing to offer except more consumer goods, Eastern Europe reenters history, thanks partly to the recapture of the national idea and to the historical imperative of Russo-German cooperation. Many, mostly outside, fear a recrudescence of national feelings and other strong emotions, eventually ideologies. If so, this cannot be helped; it is primarily the fault of the Western Allies after the Second World War, which instead of integrating the "two Europes" pushed one into the crushing arms of the Soviet Union. Resistance and accumulated suffering created new national energies that will be difficult to channel because the only alternative channel is a

democratic-liberal model unsuitable for Eastern Europe.

In this perspective—which is not that of the eternal illusionists and late-regretters—the "unity" of Europe is a last-minute trick to pour the east in the mold of the west. The goal is a continent-wide supermarket, without a soul, without an identity, without the lessons of the past, and above all without protection from future dangers. East European populations aspire understandably to all those things from which they were deprived for five decades, whether it be easy travel abroad or imported luxuries, or even (why not at this stage) pornographic literature. Thus they give the impression of being as frivolous as their counterparts in the west. But, do not underestimate the will to national sovereignty and the power of symbols and traditions. This is the reason (which we in the west try not to see) why German unification is regarded by Eastern Europe as a positive thing. Over against a vaporous "united Europe" a German hegemony is not really feared, particularly if Russia also envisages her own modernization through German know-how. Contrary to recent history, Eastern Europe sees in the cooperation of Berlin and Moscow a potent factor for peace in the area, or at least a period in which the small countries will not have to take sides between the two continental "superpowers," and will not have to suffer devastation by one, then another, army. In this light, a "united Europe" seems like a paltry, technocratic dream, an unnecessary complication. Conflicts would still remain, except that they would not be called "foreign wars" but "civil wars." What is the advantage, except, as Talleyrand said after the Vienna Congress (which also gave birth to a "united Europe"), a new but just as hypocritical verbiage?



## Nocturne

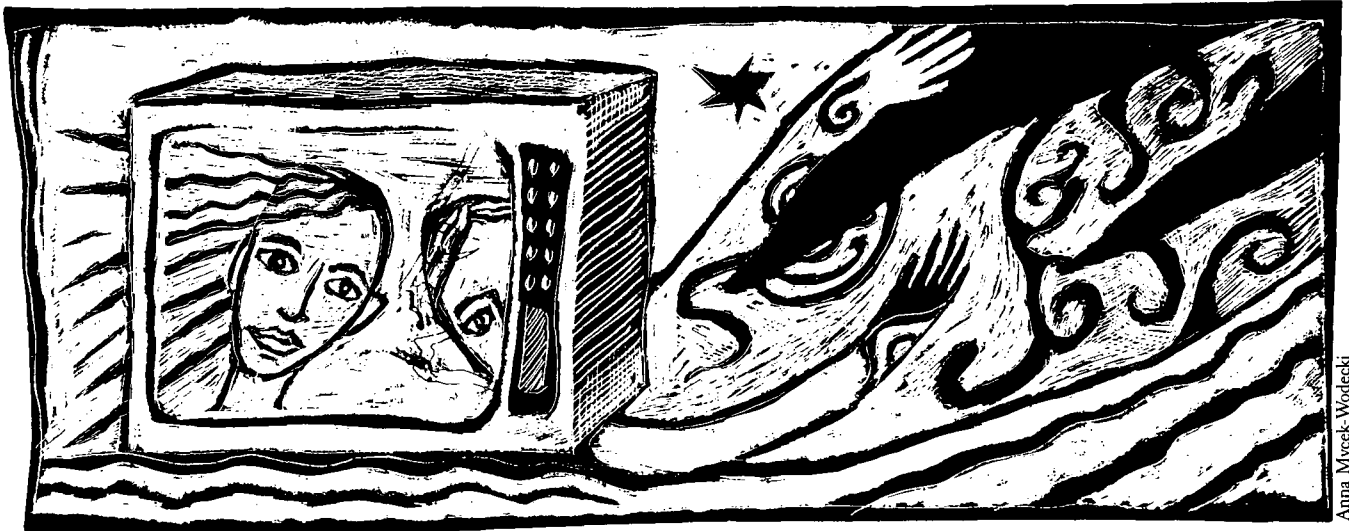
by Rudolph Schirmer

No horns, no bells, the city fast  
Asleep, complex machinery  
Bemused, no malcontents abroad.  
But I, portentously awake,  
Industrious while prone, care-fed,  
Preoccupied—a modern man,  
Contemporary fin de siècle—  
Survey the unsurpassable,  
Recount the unrepeatable,  
Lament the irreplaceable  
Scenario of buried pomps.

Dead, out of reach, extinct, foregone,  
Yet visible, still tangible,  
In certain moods absorbable,  
They exercise a valid spell  
Enduring past endurance' bound,  
Drawing the witness up or down  
To deeds ignoble or sublime,  
Training his gaze upon the whole,  
With an impartial emphasis  
That leaves him free to overlook  
But not disown his provenance.

# Nick at Nite, TV, and You

by Josh Ozersky



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Every night, in prime time, a changeling can enter your living room, an inhuman creature secretly usurping a human's place. It's an unnatural presence, an electronic phantom with vast and secret motivations; but its presence is so enjoyable and comforting, as well as so familiar (it hastens to assure you), that you really don't mind its hanging around. In fact, you are uneasy when the bogey is absent.

As the two of you watch TV, you enjoy a flattering nudge in the ribs, as you and it chuckle at the simplicity and triteness of television. You watch for several hours, including all the commercials. But when, later in the evening, you go into the kitchen for Mystic Mints and beer, you turn the set off, and the silence is visible. "Where are you?" you ask. There is no response. Your friend was a projection of television all along. Your friend, in fact, *was* television. Your "friend" was Nick at Nite, a service of Nickelodeon, a subsidiary of MTV Networks, Inc., which has discovered a secret of marketing by which we can finally be *absorbed* into the brightness and vacuum of television.

This is a heady claim to make for any TV programming, especially programming as conspicuously lightweight as Nick at Nite's. But it is because of this mask of unseriousness that Nick at Nite can insinuate itself so easily into one's half-attentive mind.

Nick at Nite was launched on July 1, 1985, the result of a decision at MTV Networks to expand its children's network, Nickelodeon, to 24 hours. "We needed to do something fast," said Debby Beece, the senior vice-president in charge of programming at Nickelodeon/Nick at Nite. "We had already stumbled across a way to treat classic programming . . . when we put *Lassie* on Nickelodeon." The success of an old black-and-white show on the MTV-modern Nickelodeon suggested a course for the new night hours. A decision was made to buy up old television shows, packaging them as "classic" for a TV generation audience. There would be no

production costs, and a slick modern veneer would be put on by an in-house advertising campaign. Tom Shales, complaining about the "Re Generation," said of cable TV's reruns, "There's no now now. Just . . . Television Land. Cable has made this even worse . . . there is an explosion of outlets for program sources, but since not enough new programming can possibly be produced . . . watching cable TV is like wandering through the network's burial ground." This is precisely what has happened. Nick at Nite now draws a very respectable three to five share nightly, and their award-winning "TV Land" campaign is prodigiously creative, ironic, and sophisticated.

This campaign defines the network. The programming itself is merely a string of defunct TV shows, unconnected by era or genre, which play in loose rotation from 8 P.M. to 6 A.M. nightly. The list extends from the 70's to the 50's: *Laugh-In*, *My Three Sons*, and *The Donna Reed Show* can be seen in succession any night (as could until recently SCTV), with only the Nick at Nite promotional campaign to bind them. They are all small terrorists in "TV Land," the concept that Nick at Nite presents itself as a guide to. In the schedule spots, for example, a TV screen is shown with still pictures of SCTV characters moving back and forth in different directions, in the form of a window display. "10:30, SCTV." The TV screen remains but the characters change. Now *Laugh-In* figures move back and forth, up and down. "Then, at 11, *Laugh-In*." The *Laugh-In* regulars, Ruth Buzzi, Arte Johnson, etc., disappear and are replaced with Fred McMurray, William Frawley, and cut-out figures from *My Three Sons*. "Followed by *My Three Sons* at 11:30."

The scheduling promotion is the briefest and crudest on Nick at Nite. I only present it as an illustration of what seems to be an underlying premise of the network. The shows themselves, taken as shows, are treated as the cartoonish nullities they usually are. But TV as an element in life—its omnipresence, the childhood spent with it, its unassailable status as a lifetime mate—this is what Nick at Nite concerns itself with. Marshall McLuhan's assertions about the negli-

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gibility of television's content would not sit well with the makers of TV Land, but their concept remains McLuhanine nevertheless. Every show gets the full TV Land treatment in its individual spot; but no show is sold straight on its own merits. Nick at Nite presents itself as something other than television: hip, ironic, condescending. It abuses its programming in order to ingratiate itself with the viewer. The psychological effect of this media ploy is subtle and devious. The shows are not chosen perfectly for strategy; only occasionally is Nick at Nite's programming as ridiculous as they make it out to be in their ultrahip campaign. Nick at Nite commercials in a sense contain the shows they describe, mastering them with sarcasm or affectionate distortion. For example: blackout, white titles, portentous voice-over:

"Your boss is a butthead."

"The Sun is a dying star."

"You stink at bridge."

Joe E. Ross, patrolman Gunther Toody of *Car 54, Where Are You?*, appears onscreen mugging "Ooh! . . . Ooh!" for an identifying instant, and then the blackout and mock gravity returns. "Car 54 can help." The Nick at Nite logo appears in the corner, and the real commercials begin. In another spot, several shows are treated in this facetious, superior way: "Behind these suburban homes lies a hidden world of passion and shame . . ."—Dick York is shown dancing—"See the ad man as you've never seen him . . . [Donna Reed] the domestic goddess unveiled . . ."—shot of Fred McMurray, from *My Three Sons*—"in a house without women, will a father lose his grip? Learn the shocking truth about the young and the restless of TV Land tonight and every night on Nick at Nite." Nick at Nite definitely appears to see through the banality of these shows. Or has it?

As David Marc has pointed out, "The distinction between taking television on one's own terms and taking it the way it presents itself is of critical importance." But the attitude of Nick at Nite towards its TV Land territories is ambiguous. Is there such a thing as affectionate distortion? The people at Nick at Nite give only mixed signals. Debby Beece, in *Advertising Age* magazine, says, "We treat the shows with reverence." Yet Nick at Nite's press release describes the network as "an irreverent and fun environment."

This contradiction might be ascribable to miscommunication between executive and middle management on a point of public relations, but for the fact that it extends to the creative element. Will McRobb, the head writer for Nick at Nite's TV Land campaign, stresses Nick's affection for TV. People who misunderstand Nick at Nite, McRobb insists, "think it's black comedy—all edge." Which isn't true.

"We basically like TV."

"Sure, it's ridiculous, but it's also valuable—it can make you happy," he says. McRobb, however, is aware of the importance of irony in his TV Land spots. "The best promos come from the dorkiest shows."

"The best promos come from the dorkiest shows" is the key to Nick at Nite, in both its conscious goals and its function in the context of television in general. With a dorky show, Nick at Nite is able to offer the viewer a way to make

an ostensibly individualistic or creative contribution to the watching of television. By constantly talking about TV Land to the TV generation, Nick at Nite attempts to in some way legitimize watching TV to a set of people who, as a cultural defense, usually keep their TV habits and their self-respect separate, except when they are watching Emmy-winning NBC "dramadies." *Donna Reed* is a dated and vacuous sitcom, which almost any TV-aware person would admit, and it is not sold by Nick at Nite as nostalgia. Instead, the viewer is invited to watch it as an affectionate joke, one that he can feel literate and respectable about, while at the same time enjoying the comforting formulaicism of the TV of his childhood. "We take the burden of guilt off people," explains Will McRobb.

Such a strategy suggests that by watching television critically, one can somehow rise above or subvert it. All a cynical viewer has to do, Nick at Nite suggests, is watch a show from a certain distance, and redemption is at hand. This is the posture offered by David Marc, in his book *Demographic Vistas*: "The viewer who can transform that cynicism into critical energy can declare the war with television over and instead savor the oracular qualities of the medium."

In his book, Marc takes this position to an extreme. He calls TV "American Dada," "a flow of dreams," and "montage in the cubist sense." TV shows are "texts" that can be read creatively (*Lucy* as proto-feminist, *The Beverly Hillbillies* as "a noble possibility conjured from America's cultural unconscious," etc.). These inflated claims are far in spirit from Nick at Nite, which is, after all, a TV network. This is not merely because, as a TV network, it can't get too intellectual; Nick at Nite rarely denies itself educated in-jokes. "Make room for dada," was slipped into a promo for *Looney Tunes*, with the assurance that no one who noticed would object. What could be more flattering than picking up an in-joke inside an in-joke? No, Nick at Nite has to be considered differently as an attitude toward television because it also happens to *be* television. It is the most visible precipitate of "metatelevision," or TV about TV, yet to appear.

Nick at Nite is a Marcan appreciation of TV, absorbed by a TV network for its own purposes. But David Marc, as a viewer of television, may be functioning as an unwitting fink, inviting TV into the critical minds of real human beings, where it's real identity will only be found out after the damage is done. Mark Crispin Miller, in his essay "Deride and Conquer," stresses the use of irony and self-deprecation by all television as a tool to protect itself from any real criticism. "The history of this subversive irony has reached its terminus," he writes. "For now the irony consists in nothing but an easy jeering gaze that TV uses not to question the exalted, but to perpetuate its own hegemony. Over and over, the spectator recurs within the spectacle, which thereby shields itself from his/her boredom, rage, or cynicism."

Nick at Nite, by taking a Marcan posture, may function as Miller suggests. "No matter how bad TV gets, it cannot easily be deplored or criticized as long as it manifests its own unseriousness." If "unseriousness" is expanded to include "self-consciousness," or rather, a false projection of self-consciousness, a few hours of Nick at Nite will confirm this,

and suggest some answers to the confusion at 1775 Broadway, Nickelodeon's corporate office.

At 8 P.M. Nick at Nite begins its broadcast night. Its prime time lineup begins with *Mr. Ed*, followed by the newly acquired *Bewitched*, which, along with the also new *Green Acres*, has been receiving the heaviest rotation of all Nick spots. At the time of this writing, *Bewitched* is being promoted in four different spots. Two are "Smart TV shoppers compare" commercials. In the first, a promotional still of the cast of the NBC sitcom *Who's the Boss?* is shown and dismissed for having "no Dick York." Cuts to shots of Dick York's "dorkiness," and the spot ends with a typically flattering Nick message: "More of what you watch TV for!" Advertising gets mocked and propagated simultaneously; and so, coincidentally, does TV. "You" are not someone who watches the stupid sitcom *Who's the Boss?*. "You" are a discriminating TV connoisseur, watching *Bewitched* instead. Now watch the real commercials. In this and other mirthfulness, the joke is made by Nick at Nite, your friend and fellow TV viewer.

The mechanism by which Nick harmlessly gives advertising and television their affectionate knocks is a common bond among its target generation: superior irony. With a bottomless source of obsolete inanity in 50's and 60's television, McRobb's generational peers are able to reassure themselves of their cultivation with no intellectual effort. Thus, Nick at Nite can produce "mock" jingles in its "mock" commercials—"Whether you like color or black and white / you get good TV with Nick at Nite—Brand reruns!"—and assure its viewers not only of their Houyhnhnm superiority, but of their lofty distance from commercials and what they represent.

TV viewing is not witless, Nick insists. For example, another promo for *Bewitched* depicts the "Nick at Nite answer man" above an imaginary correspondent's question on the given topic, "How Powerful is Samantha?" "Dear Answer Man," writes Iris, "Could Samantha create a boulder so heavy even she couldn't lift it?" To this once-theological dippy-doodle, the answer man replies, in a perfectly acceptable non sequitur, "No" (shot of car floating into tight parking spot), "but can she ever parallel park!" The Nick at Nite announcer, whether in his natural form, or disguised as the answer man, is always in a position to make fun of the shows, and, incidentally, his own useless extratextual knowledge.

The *Bewitched* spot runs in heavy rotation, but not the heaviest. That honor is reserved for *Green Acres*. Selling the show's location, "Hooterville," as "TV Land's Hometown," Nick scrolls a list of TV Towns: New Rochelle, Mayberry, Bedrock. The list is too fast to read on first viewing, and the towns' corresponding shows are never given, but the point is made: "Hooterville" is just one name on a list of TV towns, and Nick at Nite is the one with the list. And what does Nick at Nite do with shows that aren't as stupid as *Green Acres*?

*Car 54, Where Are You?*, which ran until March, and *Mr. Ed* both have a sense of burlesque about them; both are conspicuously designed to provoke honest mirth. *Mr. Ed* knows why it's funny. It's about a talking horse. But to sell *Mr. Ed*, Nick has to play up the joke even further, taking

Mr. Ed's lines out of context, surrounding them with zanier or broader zingers. Mr. Ed, at one time on the show, says jokingly, "Why couldn't I have been born a woman?" Nick takes it out, shows it, and meanly jokes, "*Mr. Ed*—it's not just for kids anymore." In another, Wilbur, Carol, and Ed are presented as a "love triangle." One can easily laugh at this stuff, but it has nothing to do with enjoying the show; in fact it brazenly subverts it. But, as all kids know, making jokes at somebody else's expense is a great way to make friends, and it makes little difference whether the jokes are true.

The fantastic contrivances, ridiculous characters, and constant mugging of almost the entire cast of *Car 54* is too obviously deliberate to be made to look silly, but Nick tried. The Nick at Nite announcer sells Toody and Muldoon as "the Enforcers," patrolling a dangerous New York City that has nothing to do with the show. Nick sarcastically points to their "serious" problems: cut to Fred Gwynne, as Muldoon, telling the captain, "We need more people for Joel's bar mitzvah." But the sarcasm doesn't work. No one would put Joel's bar mitzvah on TV as a real problem. Nick at Nite here has its face against the glass wall of an equal hipness, and, like all faces so pressed, it takes on an unpleasant expression. Will McRobb, an apparently sincere man, would protest against this reading of the spot, and did remark on the difficulty and lack of necessity of repackaging *Car 54*. But it was done nonetheless. TV Land can't have its borders compromised.

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**The shows themselves, taken as shows, are treated as the cartoonish nullities they usually are. But TV as an element in life—its omnipresence—this is what Nick at Nite concerns itself with.**

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Unless it happens by accident. Take, for example, *Saturday Night Live*, which Nick has not developed any good way to promote. One spot opens with sentimental music and a montage of famous SNL bits. "Good friends . . . Good times . . . Landsharks."

This is a funny enough satire of a beer commercial, but not of *Saturday Night Live*, which spent a great deal of its time producing exactly this kind of parody. As a Nick at Nite-style promotion, it is a complete failure. The reason is that if "the best promos come from the dorkiest shows," then SNL has to have some of the worst promos. The same is true of SCTV, which up until February 1990 followed SNL, and (to an extent) *Laugh-In*, which up until August followed SCTV. Nick at Nite had a crack at *Laugh-In*, which is dated enough to seem "dorky," or unhip. These shows had a pioneering effect on the kind of satire that Nick at Nite does so brilliantly; but they (especially when they satirize television) are competitors when on Nick's airtime. If anyone is going to master television on Nick at Nite, it is going to be Nick. As a result, it is forced to compromise its TV Land idea. "SCTV doesn't really fit into the hard-line

TV theory,” said Will McRobb. Which is probably the reason *SCTV* was recently moved to Ha! (on VH-1), and why *SNL*’s days are also numbered.

In this 90-minute period, one can make out the evolution of televisual sarcasm. The most visible changes are in the phony newscasts that not only the three comedy shows but also Nick at Nite produce. By watching the four different versions of TV parodying itself, one can trace the grain of the finished product, the pedigree possessed by Nick at Nite’s own *Global Village News*. Starting with *Laugh-In*, the phony newscast more and more comes to exclude everything outside of television.

In *Laugh-In*’s newscast, there is really no attempt to simulate a newscast. Occasionally one of the semi-regulars on the show, like Tim Conway, will play an interviewee on the screen, but there is no pretense that a real interview is happening. Conway does a skit with answering the phone, whispering into it, hanging up, having it ring again. The newscasters, the tuxedoed Dick Rowan and Dan Martin, uncommitted to any one joke, giggle at Conway’s bit. The next joke may have nothing more to do with TV news than setting up a simple visual one-liner (“Now we go to our correspondent for an in-depth interview” — cut to a well, with a voice coming from the bottom). *Laugh-In* is not really metatelevision; it only uses a TV form to keep its incessant stream of jokes varied. The jokes that are not broad comedy owe more to Steve Allen’s “Man on the Street” than real TV news.

The definitive phony TV newscast came with *Saturday Night Live*. *SNL*’s anchor didn’t wear a tuxedo, kept a straight face (albeit with occasional knowing takes), and reported topical issues. Although the *SNL* newscast was considered (and considered itself) political satire, it isn’t. Political satire has for its object politicians. *SNL* had TV as the object of its satire, and not even TV news at that, but rather TV celebrity. The jokes about Gerald Ford usually involved his public persona, or, more conducive to *SNL*’s sealing-out process, his clumsiness, which could refer back to anchorman Chevy Chase’s pratfalls. In any case, the great improvement was that the newscast was simultaneously more believable and less realistic than *Laugh-In*’s, in the sense that reality, in the form of comedy—the extratelevisual stand-up and improvisational and vaudevillian comedy of *Laugh-In*—was no longer present. TV had moved ahead once again, purging itself of older genres and sealing the airlock behind them.

Nick’s viewers are resultantly much fonder of *SNL* than they are of *Laugh-In*. *Laugh-In* is a forgotten show; *SNL* not only spawned many of today’s biggest stars, but, more importantly, spawned the style that they and their imitators live on. The phony show-business chatter of Bill Murray’s Nick the lounge singer can be heard everywhere today, as a joke, but as show-business chatter nonetheless. Paul Schaeffer, Nick’s sidekick, is now David Letterman’s. And Nick at Nite understands the implications of this. Their series of 15th anniversary spots for *SNL* suggest the only glimmers of “reverence” or, less euphemistically, direct promotion, to be seen anywhere. They compromised TV Land, and their days were numbered, but while they existed they revealed large areas of superstructure. A person is

stopped in the street. “Where were you when you first saw Nick the lounge singer?” the Nick at Nite representative asks. “I was watching television,” the person proudly answers back. It is the only time that Nick at Nite ventures into the real world, and it is only to confirm the prison of television, which, as Nabokov said of time, is spherical and without exits. The *SNL* irony is Miller’s irony, the irony that mocks and lives off the unifying chumminess the mockery produces. “TV is pervasively ironic, forever flattering the viewer with a sense of his/her own enlightenment.”

So Nick at Nite showing *SNL* is a revealing mistake. And it gets worse, from TV Land’s perspective. Also scheduled in this 90-minute block was *SCTV*, and it was *SCTV*, more than anything else on the network, that threatened TV Land. For *SCTV* is another TV Land, and a more cohesive one than Nick at Nite’s TV Land for not having made the mistake of including rival sensibilities. “We’re a living version of *SCTV*,” points out Will McRobb.

*SCTV*’s newsdesk is in a sense more primitive than *SNL*’s. There is no steady artifice, no integrity to the parody. The newscasters, Floyd Cramer and Earl Camenbert, look into the camera and read the news, but they make their own contributions, quarrel, Earl gets stoned, and many other things happen that no one has ever seen or imagined on a news show, network or local (it is never clear which it is supposed to be). Worse still, from the point of view of parody, the network president, Guy Cabellero, will berate the network employees on the phone or offstage, or occasionally come right on and speak to them on-camera. Or, to make matters even crazier, we will see him speaking to the camera, as if it were an *SCTV* cameraman behind it, and then also watch as he sits in a room by himself talking to Hank Bain (*Different Strokes* star Conrad’s brother) on a walky-talky; he is recorded by the real *SCTV* cameras, those operated by the Canadian comedy troop. As parody, this represents an almost bottomless crudity. But as “the spectator recurring within the spectacle,” it is a giant step beyond *Saturday Night Live*. When the camera, which was working for *SCTV* news of Melonville (the fictitious home of the network) pans off the news soundstage to reveal Guy Cabellero conferencing with a writer or producer Johnny LaRue, it is now working for *SCTV* of Chicago and Toronto. But when Guy Cabellero addresses the camera, it is back to working for Melonville. The line between life and television is becoming very blurred, which for television is a good thing—all business seeks to expand and merge.

*SCTV* goes off the air. Its credits roll, belatedly acknowledging the artifice of the whole enterprise. And at this point Nick at Nite takes over, and presents a phony newscast of its own. After a comedy troupe has done its version, we are ready for the end of the road: *The Global Village News*, Nick at Nite’s imitation of a newscast. *The Global Village News*, with anchorman Chuck Bruce, is a perfect example of TV’s powers of gobbling. McLuhan used the phrase in *Understanding Media* to describe television, and Nick at Nite has absorbed his criticisms, and used them to its own advantage, simultaneously making fun of them and admitting their powerless truth. Chuck Bruce comes onscreen, reads a few short and forgettable gags, and disappears behind the closing logo that is the real joke, along with the motto: “If we don’t cover it, it doesn’t matter!” The power of TV to

exclude anything not in its agenda has reached such dizzying victorious heights as to allow out-and-out gloating, crass and sarcastic and half-serious, like most everything else on TV. Our resistance to such an ugly assertion is negated by the inclusive irony with which it is made. Or is it?

Nick at Nite, Will McRobb said, is a real version of SCTV. McRobb meant this to mean a bunch of people who started their own network and put on what they liked. But it is a true statement in a deeper sense. Like SCTV, it subverts the outside world, talking about "TV" while blending, in dark glasses and false whiskers, surreptitiously into the audience. TV Land, Nick at Nite says, is a different place than where you and I live. But the "I" is television, and including the "you" with that "I" commits us to an existence that is half televisual.

When Will McRobb uses the corporate "we" in "we like television," he is not speaking in terms of individual taste. "We" are television. Particular programs do not concern television in the long haul. The good ones, like *Car 54*, *Where Are You?*, get covered with the same blanket of protective mockery as the rest. It doesn't matter in the slightest that *Car 54* is as hip and witty and self-aware as Nick at Nite itself. "We" don't like or dislike particular shows. "We" cancel them the second their ratings drop.

So Nick at Nite expands Miller's thesis: "TV solicits each

viewer's allegiance by reflecting back his/her own automatic skepticism toward TV. Thus, TV protects itself from criticism or rejection by incorporating our very animus against the spectacle into the spectacle itself." Nick at Nite pushes the inclusive sphere beyond animus, and into identity. Miller writes about TV that flatters "boredom and distrust," but Nick at Nite does not inspire these feelings. It inspires jocularly and warm fellowship with TV, and a sense of being at one with it as it laughs at itself. You are not, of course, at one with hokey *Donna Reed*, but with the commercial that pokes fun at her, affectionately. Debby Beece was wrong. The P.R. people knew their jobs. Irreverence is what TV is all about.

The success of this mechanism is already spreading. Now the Family Channel is advertising *Batman* in a kind of campy, it's-so-bad-it's-good spot, selling it as camp, when in fact it is only recycling the strenuous camp of the original show. If the past means anything on television, and it does, other networks will follow MTV's lead, in the form of its archly likable Nick at Nite. Nick at Nite has introduced a new mode of seduction, that of ingratiation not by self-abasement (TV is too powerful for that) or even of Miller's subtle irony, but of out-and-out self-love, cooed to itself while wearing a mask of the viewer's face. What will the real face look like, as a result? 

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## Seeing Double

by Rudolph Schirmer

He who prefers street corners to offices,  
Forest nooks to oratories, cosses to cathedrals,  
And was the apple of his mother's eye,  
Not the pilewort in his father's closet,

Will not be devastated if he reads  
That one so very like him it astounds  
Prefers a marble terrace with a lawn  
So like a meadow it could pass for one

Beneath him to a lodgment anywhere  
That offers nothing to step out on  
Or run off to, only surly hindrances  
To all unpolarized activity.

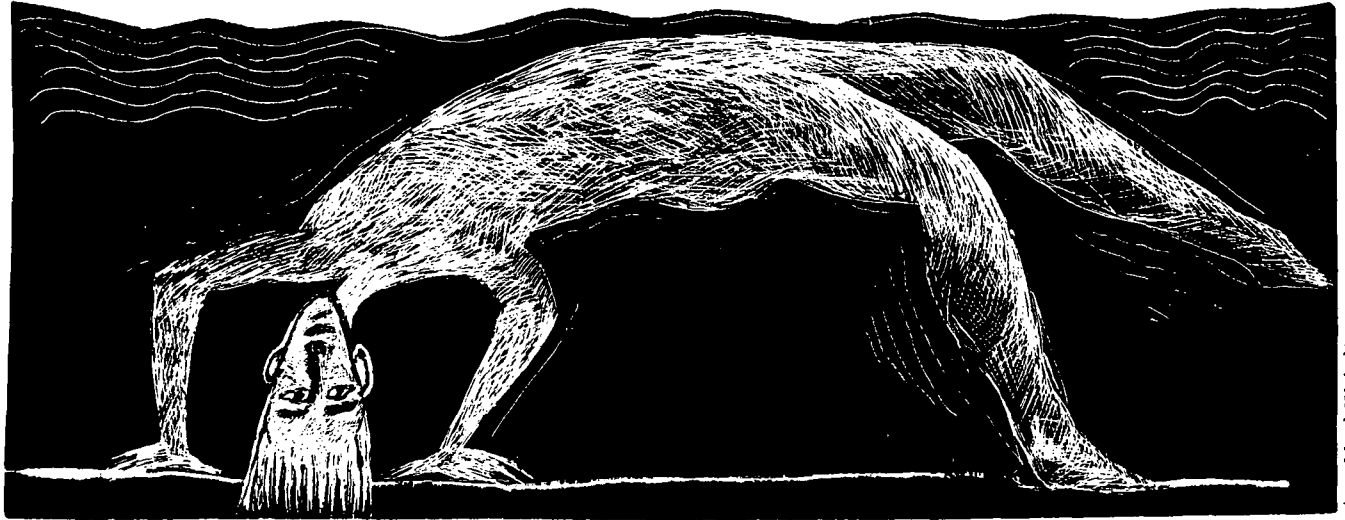
Nor should a vagrant fail to postulate  
In every cornered homebody his peer,  
Like him in all except mobility,  
Identical in everything but whim.

The world is made of opposites, we hear,  
But it is also true, and maybe even truer,  
That think-alikes and feel-alikes are in  
The manifest majority. Who knows

But someday we'll attest the fact it's time  
To curtsy to the obvious, eliminate  
The rancors that proliferate deep down  
And spend the day conversing cheek to cheek.

# The 'Bottom Line' as American Myth and Metaphor

by Irving Louis Horowitz and Mary E. Curtis



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

The question, "What is the bottom line?" has entered the lexicon of business as a near metaphysical given. It is so frequently applied to events calling for tough decision-making that it seems advisable to take a closer look at its meaning. The phrase signals a no-nonsense approach to business thinking, where presumably decisions are made without sentiment, but with skeptical, hardheaded realism. To some extent its widespread use reflects homage to business nomenclature applied to non-business areas. Just possibly, it may indicate the triumph of Milton Friedman's sense of the importance of the "no free lunch" awareness of economic factors in economically troubled situations. It also suggests William James' tough-minded thinker has entered the business world. In symbolic terms the phrase "bottom line" is often presented as the cultural expression of the need for intelligent cash management in a tight economy, where competition for investment and consumer dollars is fierce.

Whatever its explanation or sources, the "bottom line" has become a social and political metaphor for modern times. Consider this sampling of news headlines in the past decade:

As an exposé of accounting practices of American business: *The Bottom Line* is the title of a rather decent and recent 1987 text by Grace W. Weinstein.

As the *raison d'être* for the Olympics boycott: "The bottom line," the President told senior aides at a White House meeting, "is that if the Soviets are not out of Afghanistan, we are not going."

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As to why drafting women in the Army would be a mistake: an American general declares that "The bottom line is a fourth floor in a VA hospital for girl paraplegics. I just don't want to see gals on the front lines."

As to the advisability of nuclear fuels: "Nuclear Power: What's the Bottom Line?"

As to the superiority of one hamburger over another: "The bottom line is that double cheeseburgers are better at McDonald's!"

Such illustrations can be multiplied one-hundredfold. Indeed in business, emphasis on bottom line thinking is not metaphorical, but literal. It refers to the summaries on profit-and-loss statements and balance sheet tallies in general. Industries that rarely worry about the bottom line—usually labor intensive rather than capital intensive industries, or service oriented rather than product oriented organizations—are now making it a major consideration in the assessment of individual and group performance. As the popular adoption of the term suggests, the assumption is that *anything* can be reduced to its bottom line performance—and *anyone*. Industries and companies and individuals who never felt they had to justify their performance solely on economic results, who in fact evinced a certain disdain for such evaluation, have become aware that the bottom line counts; it may sometimes be the only thing that counts. Industries that never considered themselves businesses, nonprofit organizations, for example, now measure themselves in quantitative terms as they compete for donations.

What does business mean by the bottom line? Simply put, the bottom line may be any of several measurements of stability or growth employed by an enterprise to indicate its relative success or failure, or to evaluate the performance of various sub-segments within a firm. The factors included in this assessment are determined by management based on what it wants the firm to achieve. In other words, the bottom line is a fluid concept; it may be one thing at one time or in

one business, and another thing at another time or in another business. Bottom line criteria depend on the overall policy and priorities of management at any given time, and of course, on the nature of the business.

This conceptual relativity is not readily apparent in the popular use of the term. Sometimes it is not even apparent to people who are close to its application, those holding middle management positions. The great majority of workers in business, if they think about the bottom line at all, and most of those in middle management, who probably think about it a great deal, rarely comprehend all of its complexities. This is so despite the fact that middle management personnel are subject to bottom line justifications for decisions made that affect them. Many themselves make decisions in which they must display bottom line awareness and ensure that whatever top management has defined as the firm's objectives are met in their day-to-day decision-making about allocation and resource investment. In its broader application, top managers link short-term bottom line decisions to broader social and political investments and goals. Assessments of risk, opportunity, productivity, and profitability are made, each of which require broad-ranging financial assessments.

E.J. Mishan introduced the idea of applying economic rationality to social decision-making in his seminal work, *Cost Benefit Analysis*. The difficulty with Mishan's work is that he failed to acknowledge that one person's benefit is another's loss. Decision-making in the social arena usually does gore someone else's ox. Economic rationality encased in the concept of the bottom line rarely acknowledges this. As a result, bottom line thinking ignores the needs of broader stratum within a society or polity.

The phrase "bottom line" is also used in many situations involving analysis where no direct choice is actually being made. In these circumstances, the term may simply mean "all things considered," the assumption being that all things are known and have been evaluated, added and subtracted to come up with a final assessment incorporating all known elements. The assumption usually is that everything relevant has been included in the calculation, and that whatever is said to be "the bottom line" represents the final word on the subject. It may mean "the sum total" (assuming that every pertinent element has been included in the equation) or just "essentially" (assuming that every irrelevant item has been excluded from consideration). In short, the phrase, in its wider cultural usage, carries with it a notion of authority, finality, and definitiveness. There is nothing below the bottom line. When one knows the bottom line, one can act with certainty. The popular nightclub in New York City bearing that name carries that implication: if you've made it to the bottom line, as artist or audience, you've made it. Look no further.

If we may be permitted a redundancy: what is the bottom line on the bottom line? The phrase carries with it a number of ambiguities that derive in part from its origins in the world of finance. Sometimes the phrase is used when people are being evaluated as commodities, ignoring the fact that people are the assets in a given situation, and must themselves be weighed and evaluated. For example: in assessing the value of one actor or actress versus others,

producers consider their "draw value," factoring this into their decisions to hire them and the bottom line impact of their participation in a project. Similar evaluations are made in the sports arena, as the recent extraordinary increases in salaries and search for free agents makes clear. In these situations, the bottom line conveys the meaning that the current cash value of a human asset has been properly evaluated. The term thus denotes estimates of future worth no less than present fiscal value.

Another widely held application of the term "bottom line" concerns evaluating risk. In business, projections of risk are made to determine whether or not an investment opportunity meets established financial criteria. Metaphorically, the term may be employed to assess risk in any action taken. Presumably, once the level of risk is fixed, a decision to act or not can be taken. The headline on nuclear power mentioned earlier certainly carries that implication, and the story that follows attempts to address the necessity of weighing those risks.

The phrase may also be used to establish boundaries. The implication of the term is that one may go that far (to the bottom line) and no further in pursuing the facts. Use of terms such as "the bottom line is who has the power to hire and fire" clearly conveys this sense. Presumably, once the employer or leader has the answer to that question, he knows how to act.

Where does this emphasis on the bottom line come from? Is it simply that hordes of young people have emerged from business school, with MBA's they hope will give them a competitive edge in an increasingly competitive baby boom generation? Is it that professional managers who are not properly credentialed are returning to business schools for an "Executive MBA"? Is it that businesses themselves are placing more emphasis on educating employees to understand that they make investment decisions on a daily basis that have financial implications, and that they compete with other groups (inside and outside of the company) for the use of capital?

In the last six years, emphasis on the financial aspects of business management has trickled down to levels that had not previously been particularly concerned with thinking about their contribution to the firm in financial terms. The assumption is that those who make immediate day-to-day business decisions or who are affected by those decisions should be more cognizant of how people who are financially oriented make decisions about investing the firm's money. As they do, they will become more rigorous in their own decision-making. An example from a newspaper article: "We are stressing the bottom line," said a spokesman for Columbia Records, who believes that the industry has too long operated on hunches and guesswork. The industry in 1979, he said, "has had to change its way of doing things." This spokesman assumes that emphasis on financial aspects of decision-making will result in better product investment decisions and the firm will maximize use of its assets.

This point of view became prevalent in the 1980's. Almost all major corporations, and many smaller companies, now offer in-house seminars on financial management, usually called something like, "Financial Management for Nonfinancial Managers." Those selected to participate in such courses invariably welcome the invitation; it means

they will be exposed to the secret knowledge held by financial executives, and may perhaps learn how to speak their language and move up the corporate ladder. It means that they will know what is meant by jargon with which they previously felt uncomfortable. They may learn to use such jargon to ensure that their opinions and proposals are seriously received. In addition to in-house courses in financial management, many adult education programs in colleges and universities offer such courses, and they are invariably well attended. Sometimes companies pay their employees' tuition to encourage attendance. Books on the subject sell well.

One of the consequences of bottom line emphasis within commercial life is that the influence of business and financial managers within companies has been enhanced at the expense of individuals directly responsible for innovations in product development and marketing. The number of chief executives with financial backgrounds, always a high percentage, has increased. Within companies, financial executives have found a much broader range of people who share viewpoints. It may not have been their intent, but these financial courses have tended to develop new constituencies within the company, which are more amenable to financial approaches to operational decision-making. Executives who were limited to technical management of company assets, who were confined to recommending action on such matters as long-term financing, capital budgeting, dividends, and valuation, and whose authority was confined to staff and service roles, or to advising the president at best, have become increasingly involved in nitty-gritty aspects of the firm. Education works both ways. Management may have intended that nonfinancial managers would absorb financial thinking as it relates to their decisions about investment of capital, but they found that financial managers also learned about operational roles, and many felt that they could do it better. Because many if not all of the decisions made by operating people (or, in some industries, creative people) have financial consequences, many financial managers began to seek more control over these decisions. They genuinely believed that unnecessary mistakes were being made. But the consequence was that the pressure to justify operational and creative decisions in financial terms increased, and with it the influence of financial executives within companies.

A generally conservative trend was set in motion. The small scale investment decision had been an area in which financial people had not really participated. This began to change as emphasis on financial management of resources became the norm within companies. People began to think through decisions that would have been made on the basis of instinct, "feel," or knowledge of the market and to anticipate demands for financial "proof" of the correctness of even the most obvious decisions. Analysis began to displace gut feeling and unwarranted time and effort began to be spent on projecting alternative results of even small scale investment decisions. Sometimes figuring out how to present a "gut feeling" decision in financial terms became a difficult undertaking. Decision-making was slowed as entrepreneurial initiatives dwindled.

There is an inherent risk in "shoot from the hip" decision-making. The risk of excessive control is less self-

evident. The most obvious consequence of an overly controlled environment is that a large part of the energies of the productive elements in a firm becomes focused on nonproductive activity, which is what financial justification of creative decisions is. Productivity is curtailed. The marginal improvement in decision-making may not warrant the effort expended. In the latter part of the 1980's, these consequences inspired efforts to restore innovation and productivity to American business.

Some businesses have conventionally relied on human instinct and creativity, supported by after the fact formal analysis. Nonessential goods and services, in particular, have been a refuge for such creative types. The fashion industry, the cosmetics industry, books, records, and films all come to mind as examples of such "glamour industries." At their best, an unfettered creative impulse can be almost miraculously at one with the whims of the buying public. It is likely that emphasis on the bottom line has little place in industries such as these. How do you project and quantify human judgment in matters of taste? What makes a "hit"? Can the success of a design or a recording group be predicted? People in the mass market paperback business will tell you that in budgeting, they "assume" that they will have at least one winner among the numerous titles they publish. Otherwise they couldn't justify their budgets. Should this be counted on? Is this "bottom line" thinking?

Bottom line emphasis breeds caution and homogenization in decision-making: safe decisions rather than exciting, dangerous, but potentially more profitable ones. Emphasizing the need to prove out the level of risk, the game is mechanized. As a result, it is probably true that fewer errors are made. It is also probably true that fewer unexpected successes occur. The key word here is unanticipated, as the code word of major companies became "no surprises" either on the positive or the negative side. With the emphasis on developing the ability to predict and control income growth came gray and unsurprising results.

Whether or not this trend has been wholly unfortunate is open to question. But certainly there is misunderstanding of the operational consequences of the term "bottom line"—not necessarily a misunderstanding among top management, but among line managers who are in the end responsible for the decisions that ultimately comprise whatever is the bottom line. As any good financial analyst will admit, there are many bottom lines. There are no universally agreed upon notions of success and failure. In strict financial terms, management may choose to emphasize profit related to sales (which is what most people in business think is meant by the bottom line). But management may decide to emphasize gross profit margin, profit before allocations, or net profit margin as the bottom line measure. Management may also emphasize the relationship of profit to investment, focusing on the rate of return on assets, either pre- or post-taxes. Management may elect to measure the efficiency with which a firm uses its resources by measuring turnover or earning power. There are many standard financial ratios by which top management may elect to measure its financial progress. The goal remains the same: maximizing the firm's assets. That is the real bottom line. The investment decision is an important component of

that goal, but it is one of several components.

An imperfect understanding of the bottom line among middle management is inherently dangerous. Overemphasis on the profit goal narrows corporate strategies and sometimes even works against national goals, such as full employment, controlling inflation, and growth. If profit is the primary goal, as it usually is in American business, a business tries to produce what the market can absorb at prices that guarantee the requisite profit established, or to produce the product at the cheapest possible price for labor. In other business cultures, in Japan, for example, the goal might be to employ as many people as possible and to keep them employed—to maintain productivity at the expense of profit. Different decisions would thus be made about pricing levels, production goals, and capital (equipment and technology) purchases. Generally, in the United States, the quicker the profit goal is expected to be met, the less risk is involved; the longer the firm must wait for its return on investment, the riskier is the investment. An overly cautious firm, with sophisticated financial controls, might elect to make only short-term investment with low capital risk; or under extreme circumstances, to defer investment decisions entirely. We witnessed a great deal of this sort of cautionary spirit in the 1980's, with a consequent loss of leadership in key industries to the Europeans and Japanese.

Businesses in which middle managers have a narrow understanding of the term "bottom line" are businesses with potential trouble. Middle managers may react to increased emphasis on investment decisions with concern about profit, pure and simple. They may begin to restrict themselves to choices with limited perceived risk. They may take longer to make decisions, de facto foregoing opportunities in extreme circumstances and in highly competitive environments simply losing out to more aggressive firms. The line of least resistance will be the project that looks like other projects proposed. As this kind of thinking becomes endemic to broad sectors of American business, we massively lose out to companies and countries with a different understanding of management requirements.

A related danger is concurrent with the first. Innovation has become increasingly difficult in bottom line oriented environments. A safe choice has a measurable precedent. An innovative act, by definition, rarely has a precedent. No one can predict with certainty what something new will cost or what it will yield. All the analysis in the world will not change the fact that, in the end, a human being must *decide*, go or no go. But that decision becomes increasingly difficult as real or imagined risk increases and as the absolute cost of persuading others becomes greater and more time consuming. As individuals are negatively rewarded for innovative proposals, they turn to more predictable efforts that look reassuringly familiar, arouse fewer questions, and make life easier. As the cost of being innovative becomes too high, innovative people may either leave a difficult environment or cease being innovative. This in part may have explained the enormous increase in the 1980's in new businesses in which there is more interest in growth than profit per se, and where accountability is clearer and hence decision-making seems less risky.

Bottom line thinking is characteristic of larger companies. Smaller companies are often preoccupied with survival

issues such as cash flow and distribution of resources rather than profitability and market share, except in the most immediate sense. Smaller companies trade off scientific aspects of business planning, including financial management, in return for maximizing use of the creativity and innovation they possess in their human resources. Many small companies have originated from the ideas of an individual or a group of innovators who were uncomfortable within the context of a larger business. Larger companies have tended to trade off unfettered individual creativity, even brilliance, for safe, predictable results, by focusing on control elements such as bottom line justification. As they have lost the ability to respond quickly, they have succeeded in producing more predictable results. Large companies cannot put too much faith in particular individuals; too often management has only the vaguest sense of who is responsible for what results. To protect the company from mistaken assumptions about whose decisions management can trust and whose it can't, management employs overall, even-handed caution: every employee must meet certain established guidelines designed to protect the company's bottom line goal. If a product or a marketing suggestion can't be shown to have demonstrable benefit, the suggestion can't be taken.

Smaller companies use the inhibitions of larger firms to their own advantage. In the past decade economic research has shown that smaller enterprises (employing twenty or fewer individuals) have been those that create new jobs and innovations. Between 1969 and 1986, nearly two-thirds of new jobs were generated by businesses with twenty or fewer employees. Commerce Department data shows that young high-technology companies had the highest job growth and sales growth. While this is somewhat removed from the subject of the bottom line, if in fact risk-taking and return on investment are inversely correlated, then one can see how risky vague metaphors can be for the health of the business firm.

A primary characteristic of smaller companies is informal or flexible structures of decision-making. Usually a small number of individuals are involved in decision-making, and the evidence required to take a decision is flexible and depends on the project being proposed. Projects may be pursued beyond the bounds of economic rationality; that is,

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**The language of the bottom line signifies the dominance of a utilitarian ethic that perceives business survival in narrow terms unconnected to the national commonwealth.**

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if common sense dictates that more resources should be invested in a project before it is abandoned, they will be invested. Decisions to cut off work on a project are rarely dependent on fixed rules.

The emphasis on bottom line decision-making in established companies, which have obligations to impersonal

stockholders and whose managers have definite profit objectives for which they are held strictly accountable, provides significant opportunities for smaller companies. Small companies often rely on substantial investment of donated labor and deferred profit expectations. Simply put, principals in the firm usually work long hours for which they receive no monetary compensation, and often underpay themselves for the hours for which they are paid. Such principals rarely have to hold themselves accountable to impersonal stockholders, and any profit can be re-invested in the ongoing enterprise rather than shared with stockholders concerned about short-term financial payoffs. New opportunities can be pursued without elaborate justifications to managers who may not even be directly involved with operational aspects. Accountability in small businesses, in short, is generally held to a minimum. Primary accountability is to suppliers, who do have the ability to shut down a business by cutting off goods or materials for production.

Government now recognizes that smaller companies are the bedrock of entrepreneurialism in the United States. For the most part, as a company has increased in size, it has become more difficult for it to innovate in any area other than its products. Larger companies, finding it difficult to increase market share and improve profitability, have turned to acquisition in lieu of innovation as a means of developing new businesses and entering new markets. Again, the merger mania that resulted in a cascade of takeovers in the 1980's was a reflection of such bottom line thinking. There is a danger in this sort of growth, which takes place in lieu of internal development and creativity. Larger companies have increasingly attempted to spur internal innovation by establishing risk venture groups within the parent company, groups presumably exempt from the normal profit requirements of the company and given a specified time to reach an acceptable level. The results have been mixed, since the specified time frame to innovate varies so dramatically from firm to firm and, indeed, even within a single firm as overall conditions change.

Generally, risk venture is not well handled by a large company, which does not like to behave like a bank. Corporate executives who have been innovative in established contexts are rarely able to come up with new ideas on command. Divorced from their ongoing enterprises, for them innovation sometimes simply will not happen. Ideas usually develop out of the imaginative extensions of people in the midst of their ongoing work. But again, bottom line thinking stimulates cumbersome procedures that prevent innovation or risk.

One conventional mechanism large companies employ to encourage new development is sometimes effective; that is, management simply increases its volume demands on an ongoing division and leaves it to the division to decide how to meet those demands. In certain circumstances, the result is innovation. The problem here is that large companies, especially in times of radical business fluctuations, are notoriously impatient when it comes to results. Many times an effort that might have worked, given time, is killed early in anticipation of failure; sometimes a self-fulfilling prophecy is at work.

At the commercial level, the problem of the bottom line is uniquely a problem of large-scale business. At the upper reaches of industry risk is difficult and failure disastrous. The innovating impulse shrivels in direct relationship to the demand for profitability in excess of inflationary spirals. But the world of the tried-and-true product is invariably crowded, thus leading to intensified competition for market share as a means of protecting profitability rates. Demands for bottom line thinking are ultimately curbed by the inability of conservative policies to spur growth and innovation while satisfying profit demands. Innovation involves potential risks usually far in excess of the prudential philosophy of money management. The dialectic of corporate survival and growth, profitability and prudence, stability and innovation, are not so much clarified as disguised by the metaphorical uses of the bottom line.

The bottom line started as a metaphor for prudent financial management and has ended as a myth disguising a zero growth economy—the very outcome the metaphor sought to overcome. In larger terms, it heralds the passing of the swashbuckling entrepreneur, willing to risk all and doubt everything, in favor of cautious money managers willing to risk nothing yet secure in their belief of the wisdom of corporate headquarters. It is no accident that the phrase “bottom line” derives from the language of accounting rather than the Protestant work ethic. The shift from owner to professional management indicates the degree to which large business enterprises have become captive to their accounting departments. Instead of supplying data measuring how a business is progressing or regressing, financially-oriented professional managers now supply the myths by which corporations should be run.

The language of the bottom line signifies the dominance of a utilitarian ethic that perceives business survival in narrow terms unconnected to the national commonwealth. Profit margins are maintained as rates of economic growth burrow to zero levels, large firms take over smaller firms in an attempt to compensate for their failure to innovate internally. Competition for investment and consumer dollars intensifies. In fact, only when risk is seen as a desirable consequence of business dynamism will innovation regain its rightful place in American industry. At such a point, the myth of the bottom line will appropriately yield to the reality of multiple sources of business creativity or, simply put, to multiple bottom lines.

Until such a revision in business ideology takes place, reductionism and determinism will rule supreme. There is a strange sense in which the notion of the bottom line is actually the commercial adaptation to the vulgar Marxist idea of economic determinism. It has all the glamour of the tough, utilitarian notion that “ultimately” all things are determined by economic forces and relations of production. And yet it does so without the sting of moral turpitude that Marx himself conveyed by the cash nexus. But whether as criticism or celebration, a tenderhearted appeal to revolution or a tough-minded faith in the established economic order, the hardheaded aims of bottom line thinking has failed in its purpose. Given the fallacies of a blatant reductionism in economics and a fatuous utilitarianism in psychology, this might be a good time to retire the bottom line to an accounting pasture—whence it originally came. ◇

# Our European Cousins

by Samuel Francis

*"All great peoples are conservative . . ."*

—Thomas Carlyle

**Carl Schmitt: Politics and Theory**  
by Paul Edward Gottfried  
Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood  
Press; 168 pp., \$39.95

**Against Democracy and Equality:  
The European New Right**  
by Tomislav Sunic  
New York: Peter Lang;  
196 pp., \$39.95



Anna Mycek-Wodecki

What does it mean to be “right-wing”? Since the term and its companion “left-wing” first appeared in the wake of the French Revolution to describe, respectively, those who opposed and those who supported the revolutionary agenda and legacy, one plausible meaning of “right-wing” is that it pertains to those who dissent from the Revolution’s main slogan, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.” In its place, men and women of the right would support something like “Authority, Hierarchy, Community,” though admittedly no one is going to start marching through the streets chanting it. More generally, the “right” consists of those who, in opposition to the left’s defense of universality, defend particularity—political, cultural, ethical—or, as Oswald Spengler put it in a phrase quoted by Tomislav Sunic, the right defends the implications of the obvious but often ignored truth that “everybody is born into one people, one religion, one social status, one stretch of time and one culture.”

Except for contemporary pseudo-conservatives, who have convinced themselves that political, economic, and cultural universalism is somehow conservative, the identity of the right with

the defense of particularity covers both its American and European branches. Thus, Americans who have sought to conserve the institutions of the Republic, the Constitution, and the unique political culture on which they rest are no less “right-wing” than the monarchists and ultramontanists of the Continent. The particularity the Yanks want to conserve just happens to be a different one from the one the altar and throne boys like, though both of them perform much of the same social and psychic functions.

The most common response of most American conservative readers to the subjects of Mr. Gottfried’s study of Carl Schmitt and Mr. Sunic’s study of the European New Right will be to wonder what they have in common with the American particularity that American conservatives want to conserve. Schmitt, as Mr. Gottfried acknowledges, was a Hobbesian authoritarian who was too close to National Socialism for comfort, and the New Rightists regard him as one of their forerunners, at the same time that they voice scathing criticisms of Judaism and Christianity, capitalism, and democratic equality. Few American conservatives, who are usually exponents of Old Republicanism, will leap into the arms that Schmitt and his intellectual descendants offer. Yet not the least of the merits of each book is that the authors make it fairly plain why the American right has a good deal to learn from its European cousins.

Mr. Gottfried argues convincingly that Schmitt’s flirtations with the Nazis were opportunistic and that the Nazis themselves had little use for him—indeed, he was lucky to avoid a concentration camp. He also shows that much of the criticism of Schmitt in the Western world has been an *ad hominem* argument that neglects the intrinsic merits of Schmitt’s ideas. Indeed, while Schmitt’s short-lived coziness with the Nazis raises questions about his judgment and his intellectual integrity, Mr. Gottfried shows that one of his main concerns prior to the rise of Hitler was to warn against the spinelessness of the Weimar democracy and the universalist liberalism that animated it precisely because they were unable to constrain totalitarian forces like the Nazis and the Communists.

It was Schmitt’s main contribution

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to conservative political theory to formulate a conflict-based (or, in Julien Freund's term, a "polemological") model of political society, in distinction to the consensus-based model that has been a staple of conservative thought since Aristotle. Probably the only other major conservative thinker of this century who has advanced a conflict model was the late James Burnham, who drew it mainly from Machiavelli and his descendants such as Vilfredo Pareto, and both Burnham and Pareto are also icons of the European New Right. Schmitt, however, drew his conflict theory principally from Thomas Hobbes. He defined the "political" in terms of the "friend-enemy" distinction, stating that any relationship that involves an antagonism between "us" and "them" is by its nature political. The chief problem for Schmitt, as it was with Hobbes, is the settlement of the antagonisms within and among political societies, which are artificial constructs subject to human will rather than the natural organisms that classical and medieval thought conceived.

Schmitt argued that that problem is intensely aggravated by liberal regimes such as Weimar that refuse to abjure a commitment to "pluralism" and enforce order and in which sub-state interest groups contend for power. Using the discourse of "rights," such groups disguise their quest for power while in fact extending it throughout civil society and thereby paralyzing the state at the same time they "totalize" the scope of politics. Democracy, in Schmitt's view, "aims at the total politicization of all of human existence," and he was one of the first to distinguish between authoritarian and totalitarian states and to defend the former on the grounds that they limited rather than expanded the domain of the political.

Similarly, Schmitt saw the sovereign national state as in decline, in part because of the rise of the "total state," which abandons traditional limits on national conflict; in part because of the technological integration of states; and in part because of the emergence of an intellectual class, itself a sub-state interest group, that seeks to capture power and impose its own universalist values on domestic as well as foreign states. The extreme case of such intellectuals contesting for power is the terrorist and

the partisan, but, as Mr. Gottfried argues, there is only a difference of degree between these and such universalizing intellectuals as civil rights activists and global democratists who demand that all states conform to their private goals, but do so by appealing to the universalist premises shared by the liberal state.

Mr. Gottfried's exposition, defense, and criticism of Schmitt's ideas is probably the best account of this maligned but significant thinker, though at times he tends to dwell more on what other commentators have had to say about Schmitt than on Schmitt himself. Nevertheless, in a brilliant concluding chapter, Mr. Gottfried argues for the continuing relevance of Schmitt's ideas to contemporary derailments of the public order by the left and its neoconservative and Straussian sparring partners.

Mr. Sunic is also an admirer of Schmitt, and he devotes a short chapter to him as well as to Pareto and Spengler as intellectual ancestors of the European New Right. Mr. Sunic's book is the first English-language study of this movement, and its main failing, aside from the author's evident discomfort with English, is its brevity. The "European New Right" refers to a multinational constellation of critics of democracy, capitalism, communism, and Christianity, and is perhaps best known in the United States for its "paganism" and alleged racism. So various and complex are the writers and thinkers of this movement that they merit a far larger treatment than Mr. Sunic has attempted.

Yet he has managed to pack in a good deal of information and to discover several important common themes among the writers he surveys. He acknowledges that the term "right" as commonly used does not always apply to them, but since they are offering defenses of what they take to be the particularism of Europe and its specific cultures and launch effective critiques of equality, universalism, and other abstractions affiliated with the left, there is no problem in placing them on the right, despite their debt to Marxists like Antonio Gramsci and their radical alienation from contemporary political, economic, and cultural institutions.

By far the most intriguing part of Mr.

Sunic's book is his account of the New Right's critique of equality, "economics," and Judeo-Christianity, which, rather than the secularism of the Enlightenment, it sees as the root of egalitarianism and universalism. "For the New Right," writes Mr. Sunic, "the chief axiom of liberalism and socialism is the dogma consisting of human rights and the unity of mankind—a dogma inherited from the Judeo-Christian eschatology and subsequently transposed in a secular form into the modern world." Biblical passages such as Galatians 3:28—"There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"—as well as a number of studies he cites of the Hebraic origins of egalitarianism would seem to support the New Right's interpretation. But orthodox Christians and Jews would argue that such passages were intended to refer to transcendent realms and not as political blueprints. In the case of Paul's letter to the Galatians, the purpose was to justify Christian evangelism to the Gentiles—not to deny significant cultural distinctions between Jews and Gentiles. Christians would argue that it is the heretical secularization and abridgment of their theological tenets that lead to egalitarianism and universalism, not their true meaning. The New Right, in Mr. Sunic's account, does not seem to have dealt with that response, though it is possible to argue that the temptation to secularize theological doctrines is irresistible and inevitable. Once unchecked, even otherworldly promises of equality will be conscripted for very secular political purposes.

The New Right in fact does see in Judaism and Christianity the sources of secularization, rationalization, and what Max Weber called "the disenchantment of the world," simply by virtue of their monotheistic rejection of a spiritualized nature. "For the New Right," says Mr. Sunic,

the chaos of the modern polity has primarily been caused by the biblical monotheism. In the very beginning of its development in Europe, Judeo-Christian monotheism set out to demystify and desacralize the pagan world by slowly supplanting ancient pagan

beliefs with the reign of the Law. During this century-long process, Christianity has gradually removed all pagan vestiges that coexisted with it. For the authors of the New Right, the desacralization and the "Entzauberung" [disenchantment] of life and politics has not resulted from Europeans' chance departure from Christianity, but rather from the gradual disappearance of the pagan notion of the sacred. Never has Europe been so saturated with Judeo-Christian mentality — at the moment when churches and synagogues are virtually empty.

Alain de Benoist, the chief exponent of the New Right, argues that the triumphs of monotheism meant the victory of exclusion and intolerance and that polytheism "acknowledges also the plurality of cults offered in their honor, and above all, the plurality of customs, political and social systems and conceptions of the world." He is correct, but this is hardly a virtue for those who want to defend a cultural particularism. Benoist does not seem to notice that polytheistic tolerance contains the same flaw to which Schmitt pointed in modern liberal pluralism. By tolerating all cults and the "plurality" of values and institutions, the tolerant pagan imperium of antiquity paved the road for the disintegration of its own unity and its eventual displacement by the oriental cult of Christianity.

The New Right's rejection of equality is not predicated only on its critique of Judaism and Christianity, however. It also makes use of sociobiology and anthropology to refute the claims of egalitarianism, and it finds in modern mass society "basically a sign of the modern refusal to acknowledge man's innate genetic, historical, and national differences as well as his cultural and national particularities — the features that are increasingly being supplanted with a belief that human differences occur only as a result of different cultural environments." Its critique of economism is based on its own rejection of liberal doctrines of individualism and equality of opportunity, which it sees as the basis of the socialist equality of result.

The New Right contains too many different voices and too many complex ideas to be analyzed adequately in a monograph as brief as the one Mr. Sunic has written, though he has performed a masterful job of drawing a concise, composite portrait. The American right may find itself repelled and alarmed by these avant-garde critics of democracy, capitalism, and religious sensibility, but they have had the boldness to say a good deal that is more important than the current babble about "empowerment," "human rights," and "opportunity" that passes for "conservatism" in America today.

Both Carl Schmitt and his intellectual heirs in the European New Right are instances of what may be called "countermodernism" — the broad tendency to make use of modernist ideas, values, and methodologies to criticize the conventional utopian meaning of modernism. Thus, Schmitt relies on the modernist conflict theories of Hobbes rather than the traditional conservative Catholic doctrines to which he was drawn as a young man, and the New Rightists look to sociobiology and anthropology rather than to religious and

pre-modern metaphysical authorities to challenge the left's faith in equality and social manipulation. Jeffrey Herf has included Schmitt as an example of what he calls the Weimar Republic's "reactionary modernist" intelligentsia, and the commonplace that the right must necessarily challenge the whole of modernity, as most American traditionalists have done, needs to be reexamined.

The importance of both Schmitt and the European New Right lies in their use of some elements of modernism to challenge other elements and their exposure of the ideological dynamics and weaknesses of what are now triumphant forces that work to extirpate the particularism of European culture and the political authority that guarded it. They undertook these efforts, moreover, when not only the legitimacy but even the memory of what they defended was the object of vitriolic hatred by those who now posture falsely as the right. Their achievement, and that of Mr. Gottfried and Mr. Sunic in making their ideas accessible in these well-researched studies, ought to justify a strong interest in their ideas on the part of the real American right. 

## BRIEF MENTIONS



### THE TRUTH OF VALUE

by Paul Ramsey

Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press; 139 pp., no price

If there is one thing taken for granted by most serious thinkers, it is the gap between the realm of fact — things like the sun and stars, blood and hormones — and the realm of value — beauty, truth, and good. In recent years philosophers like Stephen Clark, Mary Midgely, and Alisdair MacIntyre have challenged the assumption (either created or popularized by the utilitarians) on a number of grounds. Now Paul Ramsey, poet and essayist, has entered the same thicket of ontology and ethics, and if his answers are less technical than those of the philosophers, his imaginative power is equal to the task.

It is a fact, Ramsey argues, that Shakespeare is a great poet, but what he had for dinner cannot be known. "If value is not real, neither facts nor science can have value," he concludes. Since any use of language entails evaluation, the entire project of analytical philosophy — the value-neutral analysis of expressions — is of doubtful value (as John Searle, among others, points out). Near the end, Ramsey asks the question, "What is compatible with language and experience?" and answers with "The reality of value." To the objection, "But to admit that much is to open the door toward theism, toward Christianity," he replies, "Yes, it opens it wide, an opening which explains some of the fiery resistance to the move."

In little more than 100 pages, Paul Ramsey has grappled with what I believe to be the most serious question troubling the human mind in these times, and he has done so in a prose that is both graceful and lively.

— Thomas Fleming

# Our Constitution: Alive or Dead?

by George W. Carey

*"Your Constitution is all sail and no anchor."*

—T.B. Macaulay

## **The Conservative Constitution** by Russell Kirk

Washington, D.C.: Regnery  
Gateway; 241 pp., \$22.95

Consensus on the benign motives of our Founding Fathers and the nature of the Constitution that had persisted through the 19th century began to crack at the beginning of the 20th under assaults from the Progressives. It has disintegrated at an accelerating rate since, so that today we, as a people, are uncertain of our legacy. In this work, addressed to the "common reader," Russell Kirk does not settle any of the controversies that have given rise to this disintegration. Nor does he appreciably advance our understanding of the subtle disputes over the nature of our founding that have emerged in recent decades. But he does make some interesting points that are bound to add fuel to the fires.

*The Conservative Constitution* consists of lectures that have been spliced together into 15 chapters, only loosely connected with each other by their focus on some aspect of our constitutional order and certain problems surrounding its meaning and operations. The first six chapters, in one fashion or another, deal with the Framers, their goals, and the influences on their thinking; the remaining chapters with disparate matters such as pornography, the differences between our Bill of Rights and the French version of the "rights of man," the controversy over "original intent," the intended meaning of the Establishment clause of the First Amendment, the constitutional protection of property, and, among others, secular humanism.

At the outset, Kirk maintains that "whatever may be said of certain Supreme Court decisions since the Second World War, the Constitution con-

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Anna Mycek-Wodecki

tinues to function today as a conservative framework for the Republic." "No other national constitution of our time," he emphasizes here and throughout, "extends such protection to Permanent Things." Now, in Kirk's estimation, we are heavily indebted to Edmund Burke for the conservative character of our Constitution. The American patriots, those who fought for independence, were as one with Burke on at least one significant point: they viewed themselves as fighting for a restoration of the rights and liberties that were part of the English tradition. In contrast to the French Revolution, then, the American Revolution was not really a revolution at all; the Americans, unlike the French revolutionaries, "intended no radical break with the past." Rather, as Kirk writes, "they thought of themselves as conservators rather than innovators"; in their resistance to the innovations of George III

"they were endeavoring to prevent, rather than to make, a revolution."

In dealing with Burke's influence on the Constitution, Kirk goes beyond pointing up a mere coincidence of a "conservative" outlook between the Framers and Burke and undertakes to show the direct impact of Burke's views on their thinking. In this endeavor, which moves into relatively virgin territory, Kirk is far from convincing. For instance, he places great significance on what he perceives to be the correspondence between "the general frame and substance of the United States Constitution" and "the political principles of the Rockingham Whigs, whose manager and intellectual chief Burke was." In this regard, however, Kirk acknowledges that Burke probably would not have endorsed the Constitution without reservations, chief among them being its provision for the separation of powers. Yet, given the fact that the separation of powers is a fundamental principle of our constitutional order—one that accounts in large measure for its organization, structures, and procedures—such a reservation cannot be lightly dismissed. In fact, it belies Kirk's argument concerning Burke's enormous influence on our Founders, the more so as Hamilton points out in *Federalist* 9 that key elements of the separation of powers—e.g., "distribution of power into distinct departments," "the introduction of legislative checks and balances"—will serve to spare the new republic from the "perpetual vibration between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy" that have proved fatal to previous republics. Nevertheless, even with regard to the matter of separated powers—a constitutional principle that enjoyed virtually unanimous support at the time of ratification—it is fair to say that the Founders did share Burke's temper and concerns: building on their own political traditions and practices, they were concerned with establishing institutions that would provide orderly

and decent government. Certainly they did not live in the gnostic world of the French revolutionary ideologues with their visions of a perfect order built upon reason.

While Kirk does not make a convincing case that Burke had a significant impact on the Founders, he is on firmer ground in arguing that John Locke cannot be regarded as the philosopher of the Constitution. "If we turn to the books read and quoted by American leaders near the end of the eighteenth century," he contends, "we discover that Locke was but one philosopher and political advocate among the many writers whose influence they acknowledged." Leaving Burke to the side, among those of greater significance for the Founders, he believes, were Montesquieu and Hume (both of whom, unlike Locke, are cited in *The Federalist*): Montesquieu because he provided them with "a theory of checks and balances and of the division of powers"; Hume because he pointed to the possibilities of an extended republic with a multiplicity and diversity of interests that could provide stability, free from oppressive majorities.

Consonant with his views on Locke and Burke, Kirk rejects the notion that the first part of the Declaration of Independence, with its "appeal . . . to self-evident truths," embodies the supreme values of the American tradition. With Carl Becker he holds that "the phrases of the Declaration [particularly those of the second paragraph], congenial to the *philosophes*, were calculated to wake strong sympathy in France's climate of opinion." For this reason, he regards the Declaration's justification for independence as a departure from "the constitutional argument of the Americans that had been advanced ever since the passage of the Stamp Act. Until 1776, protesting Americans had pleaded that they were entitled to the rights of Englishmen, as expressed in the Bill of Rights of 1689." What is more, whereas the rights of Englishmen had emerged from the existential realities of the British tradition, the Declaration advances "fanciful claims of natural right" derived from "*a priori* theories." Such a view, it should be noted in passing, is bound to raise hackles. It is,

for example, an anathema to the Straussians, who look upon the Declaration as the centerpiece of our political heritage.

Continuing in this vein, Kirk devotes a chapter to the differences between our Bill of Rights and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. Here, again, he notes the Burkean character of our formulation of rights; they constitute "sanctions" derived from "ancient statute and charter, the common law, precedent, British usage, colonial custom." "In effect," Kirk notes, "the guarantees and protections of the first eight Amendments were principally reaffirmations . . . of rights and immunities already established and accepted as a matter of course in the thirteen states." In contrast, the Rights of Man were derived from "natural-right [not natural law] doctrine" and "the abstractions and the visions of such speculative minds as Rousseau." Thus, the rights proclaimed were "amorphous," lacking "legal precedent," and "flouted . . . often by the very neophyte politicians who had promulgated them."

The foregoing illustrates what I believe to be Kirk's chief contribution, namely, showing that the gnosticism that characterized the French Revolution, and against which Burke inveighed in his *Reflections*, is not part of the American founding experience—save, perhaps, as it seeps in through the likes of Jefferson. As remarked above, however, we cannot legitimately infer from this that Burke's views exercised a profound influence on our Founding Fathers. In fact, in my view, it is quite likely that if Burke had never lived, the Constitution would have turned out exactly as it did. What can be said with a high degree of certainty is that the Founders shared Burke's understanding of the place of man in the order of being, the organic nature of civil society, and the limitations of abstract reason in the affairs of men, as well as his respect for tradition and fear of capricious and arbitrary government.

Finally, as intimated above, save for certain decisions by the Supreme Court in recent decades, Kirk believes our constitutional order to be in fairly good health, still operating well within the realm of Burkean prescriptions. He even suggests that the excesses of the

judiciary may be a thing past because recent appointments to the Court make "radical change in constitutional interpretation . . . improbable" and hold out prospects that "some ruling of recent years will be found in error." Indeed, his final paragraph begins: "The crash of empires and the collapse of constitutions have blinded and deafened most of the world since 1914. Only American territories and American laws have stood little touched amidst the general ruin."

Probably most traditionalists (myself included) will not share his estimate of our constitutional health. In fact, they might well regard it as naive. To begin with, they would no doubt point out that the problems with judicial power cannot be remedied by a mere change of personnel; that they involve far more than simply overturning the outrageous decisions rendered by the Court in recent decades. In their view, which is supported by our finest constitutional historians and commentators, the problems posed by the prevailing views of judicial authority are critical because they undermine our traditional understanding of constitutionalism, republicanism, the separation of powers, and the rule of law. When, for instance, the judiciary successfully asserts a power to legislate, to tax (!) in order to carry out its mandates, and then to judge its own actions, we have judicial tyranny pure and simple. The death of federalism, the breakdown of our system of criminal justice, the pollution of our moral environment, and the invention of new rights, are all the by-products of an arrogant, unrestrained judiciary guided by a liberal agenda that pays scant heed to our constitutional moorings. All of this, no matter what one's view of the judiciary, surely represents an enormous departure from the constitutional and moral legacy of the Framers. But this is not all: that the judiciary should be able to impose its arbitrary will, without serious resistance from the other branches, indicates the degree to which there has been a sea change in our collective thinking, from the natural law of Burke and our Founders to the ideology of the Enlightenment.

In sum, contrary to what Russell Kirk asserts, there is ample evidence that the Constitution of which he writes in this book is, in fact, dead. ◊

# The Lure of Black Gold

by Gregory McNamee

## The Prize

by Daniel Yergin

New York:

Simon & Schuster;

877 pp., \$24.95

January 14, 1991. As I write, more than half a million American and Allied soldiers are massed on the northeastern frontier of Saudi Arabia, arrayed against the million soldiers of Saddam Hussein. At issue is the sovereignty of Kuwait, a feudal monarchy that happens to enjoy the highest per-capita income on the planet. But, more than that, the prize is Kuwaiti oil, so pure that it needs only the slightest refinement before being pumped downstream into the motors of the First World.

In the spring of 1990, State Department analysts instructed the senior officers of the United States Central Command, the administrative head of what was to become Operation Desert Shield, that oil had lost its strategic significance. Four months later, Saddam Hussein's forces invaded Kuwait, deposing its hereditary ruling family and claiming the nation as Iraq's 19th province. Suddenly Persian Gulf oil reclaimed its place as the world's most strategically significant resource.

It earned that place, writes Daniel Yergin in his remarkable new book *The Prize*, thanks to a gambit by Winston Churchill in the early years of the 20th century. Then vice-secretary of the Admiralty, Churchill ordered that the entire British navy be refitted to burn not Welsh coal, dirty but readily available, but Arabian oil, a distant and unreliable energy source that had only been recently discovered. Churchill's move elevated a handful of Bedouin chieftains to the rule of nations cobbled together by the whims of European cartographers (on any map of the region the endless straight lines leap off the page), introducing a new era of colonialism that would soon involve

the major powers of the world, including the oil-rich, once self-sufficient United States.

Yergin's book is a thoroughgoing study, weighing in at some nine hundred closely set pages, of what might in the future be called the Oil Age, now scarcely a century and a half old. His story begins with an American academic and energy specialist, as Daniel Yergin himself is, named Benjamin Silliman, who in 1855 developed an economical method for extracting oil from the deep sedimentary bedrock of Pennsylvania and New York. (He charged a group of American financiers a then-shocking fee of \$1,500 for the rights to his method.) A scant decade later, in Cleveland, John D. Rockefeller founded Standard Oil, which in twenty years' time controlled 80 percent of the world market.

Standard Oil geologists warned Rockefeller that the firm's extensive fields in the northeast would soon be depleted, and Rockefeller dispatched agents first to Texas and later throughout the western United States to buy up promising properties. They worked so efficiently that Standard soon controlled most of the nation's oil economy from ground to gas tank, prompting antitrust regulators in Washington to agitate for its breakup. Like the hydra, Standard Oil spawned Standard Oil of New Jersey, which would become Exxon; Standard Oil of New York, now Mobil; Standard Oil of California, today's Chevron; Standard Oil of Ohio, which became Sohio and then the American branch of British Petroleum; Standard Oil of Indiana, now Amoco; Continental Oil, or Conoco; and Atlantic Oil, now ARCO. One Rockefeller executive grumbled that the company had been chopped up into such small pieces that there were no office boys in the Cleveland headquarters. They had all been sent out to preside over the firm's supposedly independent subsidiaries.

At the same time, the Nobel family of Switzerland—among whose controlling members was Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite and later benefactor of the various prizes named after him—established operations in

the newly discovered oil fields of the Caucasus, providing the wherewithal for Russia to become a world power in only a few years. Here Yergin points out the fact that the Soviet Union is today the world's largest producer of oil, and only its refusal to join OPEC ("we are not a producer of bananas," one Brezhnev-era official sniffed) has kept it from taking the economic lead away from such lights as King Fahd, and, yes, Saddam Hussein.

The international petroleum race was on. Sensing a technological revolution in the offing, Thomas Edison's chief engineer quit his job and set up a machine shop in Dearborn, Michigan, to mass-produce what he called the "horseless carriage." By 1900 Henry Ford had sold eight thousand of his contraptions; a decade later, the figure would rise to 902,000. (Today, Yergin tells us, there are 148 million gasoline-powered vehicles on the road in the energy-squandering United States, another 292 million in the rest of the world.) The oil boom went into full swing, with companies and governments traversing the globe for new holdings and atlas companies annually revising the maps of the world to reflect the new powers that oil founded: Indonesia, Libya, Iran, Kuwait.

For Yergin, the history of the 20th century can be analyzed as the history of oil exploration, extraction, and export. His long section on the Second World War is a tragedy drenched in black gold, not ideology: his Hitler longs only for the fields of southern Russia, his Tojo orders the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor only to divert American attention away from Japan's seizure of the rich oil fields of Dutch-ruled Malaysia. Yergin's analysis is far too simplistic, but it is nonetheless compelling in light of today's strange events.

The closing chapters of *The Prize* are the most urgent, though the book never fails to hold the reader's attention. With an economist's statistical precision, Yergin demonstrates that postwar patterns of energy consumption are the moral equivalent of addiction to crack cocaine, constantly rising with no regard whatever for the conse-

quences. Worldwide energy use tripled between 1949 and 1973, the year of the first OPEC embargo, but at the same time absolute demand increased 550 percent, mostly in the United States, Europe, and Japan. In the last nation oil consumption increased 137 times over, from thirty thousand to 4.4 million barrels daily. Small wonder that Japan urged military intervention in the Persian Gulf from the moment Hussein's tanks rolled into Kuwait.

We need, Yergin argues, a comprehensive national energy policy of the sort that Jimmy Carter proposed a dozen years ago. He foresees many another Kuwait, inescapably, until the United States achieves energy independence, until the European powers and Japan reduce their consumption of foreign oil, until the world economy is founded on a more sustainable source of fuel. Yergin is right, of course. And all of us, starting with George Herbert Walker Bush, need the kind of understanding of the modern world that *The Prize* offers.

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## Progressive Pilgrims

by Brian Robertson

### The Church, Pilgrim of Centuries

by Thomas Molnar

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans;

182 pp., \$15.95



“It is risky to write about an ongoing series of events, in this case the Catholic church’s history in the second half of the twentieth century,” writes Thomas Molnar in the introduction to *The Church, Pilgrim of Centuries*. After finishing Professor Molnar’s iconoclastic and often penetrating analysis of the Church’s position in the modern world and how it came about, one can only second this initial judgment.

The book traces two interconnected developments: the triumph of the secular in the capitalist West; and the Church’s response, in the form of the Second Vatican Council, to that meteoric rise. Molnar’s analysis of the as-

cent of “civil society” and the corresponding decline in the influence and power of both church and state provides a much needed corrective to pat conservative broadsides against “big government” as the source of all modern afflictions. While he recognizes that the state has become “the only visible ‘high authority’ directing citizens’ lives,” and a “substitute religion” that is both the focus of hopes and the ultimate arbiter of justice, Molnar argues that the actual power of the modern democratic state is largely illusory, since it merely serves as the functionary of the various interest groups that run society. In other words, the power of the state has been supplanted over the last two hundred years by that of civil society, which he defines as “the non-political area of transactions among citizens” that is “built on the premise of a limitless increase of human rights, rights of consumership, leisure, and moral emancipation.”

Recognizing this new order, the Church has abandoned its traditional alliance with the state and turned to civil society in an attempt to retain some of its diminishing influence. But since civil society is not a single entity with a vested interest in maintaining public order (like the state), the Church has only succeeded in joining the myriad of interest groups competing for attention in the secular realm. As Molnar puts it, “Civil society is not a historical and organic successor of the state, but its opposite. Its interest is not focused on the moral consolidation of the community; instead it expects some kind of morality to emerge as the haphazard result of its individual members’ material success.” This means that the Church works at an inherent disadvantage since it must now operate according to the tacit agreement of the interest groups vying for position in civil society: namely “the premise that there is no truth and that this agreement guarantees civil peace and prosperity.” This, of course, is a self-defeating stipulation for an institution that claims to be the divinely ordained repository of Universal Truth.

Molnar sees three choices for the Catholic Church as it enters the new millennium: one, to continue along the same line of accommodation and secularization that he claims was initiated by Vatican II; two, to abandon the

unworkable alliance with civil society and to forge a new, more ideologically coherent partnership with socialism (following the lead of liberation theologians and other post-Vatican-II radicals); and three, to abandon politics altogether and return to the eternal mandate to evangelize the world: a “re-spiritualization at the expense of politics.” Molnar contends that the continuing secularization of the sacred and the alliance with socialism are being actively pursued by various groups within the Catholic Church, while the third choice, the “missionary” option, has been almost entirely abandoned (with a few notable exceptions such as Mother Teresa). Although it is clear that he feels the Council to have been motivated by misguided notions of *realpolitik*, it is difficult to determine which political option (secularization or socialism) he believes the Council expressed — since he makes a case for both.

The problem with this type of sociological approach is that the many (sometimes necessary) generalizations that emerge allow Molnar to avoid taking up the specific mandates of the Council, in preference to which he presents anecdotal evidence of the Church’s accommodation to secular culture. In his outline of the crisis and choices facing the Catholic Church, he seems about a decade behind the course of events. With the advent of John Paul II (and the recent collapse of the Communist Empire, due in large part to his inspiration), the liberation theologians and other aging radicals are proving to be increasingly irrelevant, despite the inordinate coverage they receive in the press. And the desacralizing of the Church’s liturgy and popular piety, while still a problem, is providing its own solution: to the extent that certain elements have sought to make Catholic worship and belief conform to the notions of secular culture, they have become indistinguishable from that culture and lost their appeal, indeed their *raison d’être*, as a sign of opposition to the standards of the world. The only movements within the Church that show signs of vitality (Opus Dei, Communion and Liberation, the Charismatic Renewal), are the *orthodox* movements, as are the growing number of seminaries that are at or near capacity. They are also

firmly committed to the Council's teachings.

For the great irony is that what prevents Molnar from noticing these encouraging trends is the same relentlessly political outlook he (rightly) blames for most of the post-Council aberrations. Unfortunately, that outlook also skews his view of the Council itself. Since, in his view, "civil society" is "impermeable to conversion" because of its very structure, the result of the Church's "strategy" in Vatican II of "sacralizing the whole world and every aspect of daily life" was "the acceptance of the values of profane civilization" by the Church. In this context he quotes Cardinal Ratzinger's complaint that "many . . . deliberately raised 'desacralization' to the level of a program . . . on the plea that religion, if it has any being at all, must have it in the non-sacredness of daily life." But Ratzinger's point was precisely that this is a *misguided* conception of the Council (a conception that Molnar seems to share with the radicals). In fact, Vatican II ordained ending clerical involvement in, and direction of, secular politics, and emphasized the responsibility of laymen to bring good doctrine and well-formed consciences to their daily responsibilities (the "re-evangelization" of culture)—which is precisely according to Molnar's prescription. The Second Vatican Council is the third option—a quarter cen-



tury before Professor Molnar proposed it! A book that attempts to chart the present position and future course of an institution that, in Chesterton's words, has "died many times and risen again" is, as the author admits, risky.

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## Piety and Meaning

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

### In Praise of Blood Sports and Other Essays

by Walter Sullivan  
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press; 136 pp., \$19.95



Walter Sullivan is professor of English at Vanderbilt University, the author of two novels, and, most recently, of *Allen Tate: A Recollection*. He is also a frequent and long-standing contributor to the *Sewanee Review*, in which four of the ten essays in this volume (dedicated to, among others, George Core, *Sewanee's* editor) first appeared.

Although certain of these pieces are stronger than others, in all of them Professor Sullivan shows himself to be a good critic, and, in some of them, a very, very good one. He is a poised and polished writer, academic neither in his prose style nor in his approach to his subject. Walter Sullivan does not—as so many contemporary critics do—regard a work of literary art as an epiphenomenon, but as an objective reality: as something *made*, like a Chippendale chair, a Ming vase, or a medieval cathedral. In this he reminds me of no one so much as Edmund Wilson, whose literary essays Professor Sullivan's resemble in structure, approach, and at times even in tone (though they lack entirely Wilson's habitual irascibility, Sullivan being by contrast a notably irenic expositor). Like Wilson, Professor Sullivan does not hesitate to resort to exegesis; like Wilson also, he is so skillful an exegete as to have an effect on his reader that is nearly subliminal.

"The Last Agrarian: Peter Taylor Early and Late," "Irony and Disorder: *The Secret Agent*," "A Sense of Place: Elizabeth Bowen and the Landscape of the Heart," and "The Two Worlds of William Golding," in the present collection, are examples of this inspired-abstractive approach to either a given work or to the corpus of works by a particular author. "Waugh Revisited" is a discussion of the relationship between the art of Evelyn Waugh and the English novelist's Catholic faith; it finishes with the suggestion that Waugh's novels are perhaps best read

in chronologically reverse order—beginning with the *Sword of Honour* trilogy and ending with *Vile Bodies* and *Decline and Fall*—to give the reader a sense of how much Waugh's earlier fiction was "a long preparation for his final achievement." Apart from its implicit underestimation of the early Waugh books, so far as I can tell "Waugh Revisited" has nothing new to say about either Waugh as a Catholic or the Catholicity of his later novels, and suffers as well from undirectedness. This last criticism I think can also be made of "Irony and Disorder: *The Secret Agent*," which concludes with the unsurprising observation that "As much as the characters and the plot, the language itself . . . conveys the absurdity of the world as Conrad saw it and the moral frailty of those who inhabit it." Similarly, "Richard Weaver and the Bishop's Widow: A Cautionary Tale," adds little to our appreciation of Weaver and his work, while making it abundantly clear nevertheless that when Weaver wrote, "The South is one of those entities to which one can apply the French saying, 'the more it changes the more it remains the same,'" he was very substantially wrong. The strongest among the essays included in this volume are "*The Fathers and the Failure of Tradition*," "Southern Writers in Spiritual Exile," "Andrew Lytle: The Mythmaker at Home," and the title piece, "In Praise of Blood Sports." These four share, if not exactly a common theme, then at least a common preoccupation, and that is the modern writer and a sense of the sacred—or the lack of it.

In "Andrew Lytle" Professor Sullivan quotes a saying by Jacques Maritain, that "Only a Christian, nay, a mystic, can be a complete novelist," since only he "has some idea of *what there is in man*." Lytle himself, of course, qualifies in Maritain's terms as a complete novelist, believing as he does in what Sullivan calls "the mysterious and ultimately unfathomable connection between the Word made flesh and the words that are the incarnation of thought and the raw materials of writers." Precious few novelists nowadays can believe in that connection, even if by some mysterious accident the idea of it should occur to them. In result, according to Professor Sullivan, "[d]eprived of its sacramental quality,

literature ceases to be an art and becomes artifice" ("Southern Writers in Spiritual Exile"). To illustrate his point, he compares the work of one dead white female writer with that of a live white one: Bobbie Ann Mason, Sullivan (to my mind incredibly) asserts, has a "talent and technical virtuosity equal [to Flannery] O'Connor's," yet hers is a kind of "no-fault fiction" in which one human value is no better than another. "Unlike the fiction of O'Connor, in which underlying meanings are significant and the vision is apocalyptic, in Mason's work everything is on the surface: what you see is what you get." Sullivan continues: "When the commonly held sense of the sacred is lost, you can shout as Flannery O'Connor did, but you have to have something to shout about; therein lies the difficulty. If you are devout, as O'Connor was, you can work from your own sense of the divine, but if you do not have the sacred within yourself, your work is in jeopardy because society will no longer furnish it for you."

Professor Sullivan is *not* saying that, in order to be a great writer, one must believe in God: he is saying that great writers cannot develop in that state of moral detachment in which one no longer asks the question. Cormac McCarthy, who is probably the finest American novelist working today, writes, as Sullivan justly remarks, like a former altar boy, as beautifully as "a fallen angel"; yet McCarthy's parody of God in the figure of the Judge in *Blood Meridian* "must take seriously the idea of God or it has no significance." Still, Sullivan has to wonder: is McCarthy really a "Southern novelist," heir to Faulkner and Allen Tate? Sullivan believes that Southern writers "are writing about [the South] badly now," perhaps because, with piety largely evaporated from the South as from every other region of the United States, novelists can no longer trust in what was the birthright of earlier generations. "Writers of fiction begin with the concrete, not with the abstract. Faulkner began with what he saw and heard, with what his senses told him, and in the shaping of details and sequences, he discovered the southern piety that underlay them. My contention is that under present circumstances, with the sense of the sacred gone,

the shaping of details that are specifically southern will lead the writer to think he has done what Faulkner did, but he will not have done so. Rather he will have created work similar to that of Bobbie Ann Mason, whose stories are southern all right but are bereft of piety and meaning."

"In Praise of Blood Sports," coming at the end of the book, ties these themes together by a comparison of blood sports with the literature of games (meaning team sports), from which Sullivan discovers that the crucial distinction between the two types of activities involves the locus of their meaning. Hunting, as a ritual of death, finds its meaning beyond the act of drawing a bead, pulling the trigger, and downing the bird; while baseball and football discover theirs in a self-reflex-

ive codification of artificial rules. This explains why, as Professor Sullivan demonstrates, all good "sports literature"—meaning in this country primarily baseball stories and novels—succeeds as literature only by venturing outside the game itself, into that uncoded world where life proceeds according to the ancient ways of human folly, weakness, and true heroism.

"When *Modern Fiction Studies* invited submissions for a special issue on sports fiction (Spring, 1987), the editors received many manuscripts, but none on blood sports. Represented among the fourteen essays chosen for publication were swimming, track, boxing, football, and other, less-well-known sports; six of the pieces were about baseball." Who is surprised? In a culture that has become deaf and blind

## BRIEF MENTIONS

### THE PATH TO NATIONAL SUICIDE: AN ESSAY ON IMMIGRATION AND MULTICULTURALISM

by Lawrence Auster

Monterey, Virginia: American Immigration Control Foundation, 90 pp.

Auster is hardly the first commentator to deal trenchantly with the disaster that is American immigration policy and the colossal scam known as "multiculturalism." He is, however, to my knowledge the first one to relate the two by showing how the second issues ineluctably from the first. "It is," he writes, "only since the 1960's, with the great increase in the numbers of people from non-European backgrounds, that the battle cry of cultural relativism has become ideologically dominant. In demanding that non-European cultures, as cultures, be given the same importance as the European-American national culture, the multiculturalists are declaring that the non-European groups are unable or unwilling to assimilate as European immigrants have in the past, and that for the sake of these non-assimilating groups American society must be radically transformed."

Current U.S. immigration policies, however "revised," stem directly from the Immigration Reform Act of 1965, by which the quota system based upon the national origins plan first adopted by Congress in 1921 was redesigned to avoid "discrimination" against would-be immigrants of non-European origin. Proponents of the bill insisted that its effect would not be to change the European complexion of American society and culture, while deliberately misrepresenting the numbers of immigrants provided for by the *nonquota* allotment contained in the bill. In 1990, the U.S. admitted *over fifteen times* the number of Asians (16,000) Secretary of State Dean Rusk had predicted would arrive annually on American soil; while the numbers of people admitted from Latin America and every other part of the Third World in the past twenty-five years were also never remotely imagined by the Reform Act's supporters. "As a result [of massive immigration from the Third World]," Auster argues, "when the nation unexpectedly found itself by the mid to late 1970's experiencing unprecedented diversity . . . having abandoned traditional notions of self-interest . . . it therefore had no choice but to turn around and endorse diversity *as an end in itself*. . . . we gave ourselves a new national myth of diversity to accommodate ourselves to that fact."

But the new national myth is a delusion, and multiculturalism is a snare laid by the weak to trip up the strong, who fail deliberately to watch where they put their feet. "The end of multiculturalism is not some utopian, 'equal' society, but simply the end of American civilization." Two centuries from now, Africa will still be Africa, Latin America will still be Latin America. The United States, however, will probably have ceased to exist as we know it.

—Chilton Williamson, Jr.

to the supernatural, every part of life must—and does—seem a game, a closed entity defined strictly by its own self-referentiality. Modern “philosophy” assures us that such an entity is simply “reality,” and contemporary “criticism,” which is deconstruction, seconds the conclusion.

“What we have lost,” Walter Sullivan concludes, “—let me repeat it—is a sense of the sacred in literature and life.”

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## Love's Old Sweet Song

by J.O. Tate

**Erotic Faith: Being in Love From Jane Austen to D.H. Lawrence**

by Robert M. Polhemus

Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press; 376 pp., \$29.95



I once had the privilege of hearing Professor Polhemus deliver some of these pages as a lecture—the passage on the terrible end of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*, which I have found as superb to read in 1990 as it was to hear in 1986. I also once heard—and watched—him do a number on *The Old Curiosity Shop*, in which he not only recited a passage from Dickens but came close to acting out all the parts. When he is in this vein, we might say of him what Betty Higden said of a foundling in Chapter XVI of *Our Mutual Friend*: “You mightn’t think it, but Sloppy is a beautiful reader of a newspaper. He do the Police in different voices.”

Professor Polhemus can be a very funny man. He ought to be. After all, he is the author of *Comic Faith: The Great Tradition from Austen to Joyce* (1980), in which he argued that there was promoted in a certain continuum of fiction a comic sense that served as a uniting faith—a special religion of the humorous dispensation. That argument stands on its own merits; but I think that the earlier book’s case was a

more sustained exposition of a narrower thesis.

Nevertheless, the brilliance of Polhemus’s free-wheeling, vigorous, and exhilarating textural forays, commentaries, analyses, and speculations in *Erotic Faith* cannot be denied. No one who cares about Dickens can afford to miss “The Fixation of Love,” Polhemus’s chapter on *Great Expectations* in *Erotic Faith*, and his dissection of the scenes of Miss Havisham’s combustion and death needs to be read in its entirety.

As we should expect, there are various other passages and chapters that those who care about the British novel and about literary criticism would not want to miss. Because Polhemus is a master of metaphorical investigation, an accomplished wit, and an eloquent expositor, we can always find something valuable in his pages. I particularly relished, for example, the parts on Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette* and Hardy’s *Far From the Madding Crowd*. But I also found that the more I read of it, the less I was pleased with his book as a whole.

In the first place, his argument about the love religion is basically a rehash of what everyone has known for a long time. The rise of romantic love in the 12th century has always been recognized as a Christian heresy concurrent with the Cathars, one no doubt influenced by the Moors. Dante’s subtle rendering of Paolo and Francesca puts romantic love in perfect perspective, and implies a judgment lacking in Polhemus, though the sympathy is not. Polhemus’s claim that “the novelists . . . created the job” of telling what it means to be in love just isn’t true. The troubadours and other poets did, well before the British 19th century that Polhemus knows so well. And we might add that Vergil and Ovid and the Renaissance and Restoration playwrights stood in the background, the literary memory of British novelists. There was romance before Romanticism, love before novels, passion before the Brontës, coitus before Dr. Ruth, and the War between the Sexes before feminism (though not, of course, with as much cause).

In the second place, Polhemus has daringly thickened a complex argument with an apparatus of art criticism. I think he has not so much enriched his

exposition as he has muddled it. His analyses of various paintings are provoking and illuminating, but are a needless counterpoint to an already demanding discourse. The interdisciplinary experiment reminds me that Robert K. Wallace’s fine books, *Jane Austen and Mozart* and *Emily Brontë and Beethoven*, are oddly missing from his bibliographies—oddly, that is, from a compiler who attempts to compare the arts while writing about Austen and Emily Brontë.

A third point is a sag of standards of mind and expression. There could be only one thing more disheartening than seeing one of the most penetrating minds in academe co-opted by feminist jargon—“sexism,” “gender identity,” etc.—and that is to behold a straight-faced assertion that D.H. Lawrence’s absurd celebration of sodomy in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* “has an intentional religious resonance.” How quickly, even in an extended essay, we move from *Pride & Prejudice* to anal intercourse, sliding down the slippery slope.

I think *Erotic Faith* is undermined by an error that becomes more obvious as the book proceeds, which is to confuse art and life. Even the canny Polhemus stoops to pleading that a certain fictional passage is “good” because . . . life is like that: “Somehow that mock prose [in *Ulysses*] really does represent the spirit and pleasure of orgasm.” And a sentence like the following one must give us pause, being both untrue about *Erotic Faith*, and, I daresay, about erotic faith as well: “As I have tried to make clear, what’s missing in nineteenth century novels is the direct rendering of those moments of high intimacy and religious oneness that sexual intercourse can bring.” That’s a bit of a downer after 282 pages—there’s something defective with those same novels we were supposed to love for their erotic power! Robert Polhemus’s study seems to contradict itself in that way and in others; but because of its striking insights and powerful arguments, the book succeeds. Whether the horse he insistently beats—secular humanism, sentimental version—is dead meat, that is another question.

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## Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

### A Mind of the South



February 10 was the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Mind of the South*, W.J. Cash's classic and, in the event, only book. Reading Cash was a formative experience for most members of the symposium-going class of Southerners, so there will be a number of gatherings to mark the occasion. As a matter of fact, there was one on February 10 at Wake Forest, Cash's alma mater. Alas, I missed it: I'm in California this year, cut off from my roots and also from such delightful perks of my profession as hanging out with a bunch of my friends and talking about one of my favorite books while drinking somebody else's Jack Daniels.

As far as I can tell, the anniversary passed unremarked here in what used to be called Baghdad by the Bay, although some of the local intelligentsia were preparing for a conference of their own the next weekend, something called the National Sexuality Symposium. I thought about asking *Chronicles* to stake me to the \$245 registration fee so I could tell you all about it, but then I figured Tom Fleming doesn't really want me discussing techniques for extended orgasm or erotic filmmaking in these pages, much less whatever was said at the workshop on S&M for beginners. I am sorry to have missed the "erotic costume ball" at the San Francisco Airport Hilton, though; I had this *great* idea for a costume.

But back to W.J. Cash.

You know, he really did write a strange book. One of the strangest things about it is that it's still read and discussed fifty years after it was written. After all, historians who don't agree about much of anything else (Eugene Genovese and C. Vann Woodward come to mind) do agree that as a historian Cash is—well, a good prose

stylist. And even his prose isn't to everyone's taste these days. A saving remnant of my students share my fondness for great rolling periods punctuated by snappy colloquialisms, but more of them seem to wish that Cash would just get to the point; they don't know what to highlight with their yellow markers.

Still, the book is widely read, even when it hasn't been assigned. One day in a Buckinghamshire bookshop I spied a Confederate battle flag from across the room—on the cover of the British edition. And some of Cash's great broad-brush generalizations about the South have become almost conventional wisdom among college-educated Southerners, whether they know where the wisdom came from or not. Again and again in his recent book, *A Turn in the South*, V.S. Naipaul unwittingly paraphrases Cash by quoting his informants' "observations"—probably, in fact, repetitions of things that they read or heard as undergraduates.

It's true that many of these ideas weren't original with Cash, but he gave them popular currency. As Bruce Clayton shows in a new biography of its author, *The Mind of the South* has demanded and received attention ever since its publication. It didn't sneak up on our notice like, say, James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (published the same year but pretty much ignored until the 1960's); it was widely and favorably reviewed in both the popular and the academic press, North and South alike, and if its actual sales were disappointing—well, tell me about it. As Alfred Knopf tried to explain to Cash, that's what usually happens with serious works of nonfiction. (The book later sold very well indeed, in overseas and paperback editions, but by then Cash's widow had unwisely sold the author's rights to Knopf.)

Even if the book didn't make Cash much money, it made him an immediate literary celebrity. Many in 1941 saw it as an antidote for *Gone With the Wind*, published not long before. Cash had actually reviewed Margaret

Mitchell's book and had called it "sentimental" (than which there were few adjectives more damning in the mouth of someone who aspired to a tough, cynical, Menckenesque style), but when Miss Mitchell and her husband invited the Cashes to dinner at the Piedmont Driving Club, the two writers hit it off famously, swapping stories and compliments. Not surprising, really: both moved in the New South's smart set and shared its tastes and assumptions. Besides, "sentimental" isn't exactly the right word for Peggy Mitchell's book, just as it's not exactly the wrong word for Jack Cash's: Cash's "man at the center" looks an awful lot like Gerald O'Hara.

After his book came out, Cash also visited and schmoozed with Carson McCullers, Lillian Smith, Ralph McGill, and (oddly) Karl Menninger. On the strength of his reviews, he got a Guggenheim fellowship, and he set off to Mexico to write a novel, stopping on the way to give the commencement address at the University of Texas. (After a couple of weeks in Mexico he handed himself, but more about that in a minute.)

On the face of it, Cash was an unlikely literary giant. God knows he was a mess, as Clayton's book shows. Just a few years earlier, thirty-six years old, unmarried, and unable to hold a job for long, he had moved back to little Boiling Springs, N.C., to live with his parents. "Sleepy" (as his friends called him) was supposed to be working on his book, but he seemed to spend most of his time riding his bicycle, chopping wood, and dozing in the sun in front of the courthouse. His recurrent attacks of "neurasthenia" and "melancholia" were notorious; he also suffered from goiter and (secretly) from fears of impotence. He stayed up nights talking with an unemployed Baptist preacher, drank too much, smoked too much, and probably didn't eat his vegetables.

True, he had been a BMOC as a Wake Forest undergraduate, a campus character with his pipe and chewing tobacco, terrifying Meredith College

girls with his fierce intellectuality, writing poems and short stories, reading H.L. Mencken, and imitating the master in crusading editorials for the school paper. But then he had dropped out of law school ("you have to lie too much"). He hadn't lasted as a college English teacher, either (most students were "satisfied with football, rah-rah, and Commerce A"). He had written and burned several novels and collected rejection slips for his short stories. In a brief flurry of success in 1929-30, he had placed three iconoclastic essays on the South in Mencken's *American Mercury*; one, "The Mind of the South," won him a book contract with Knopf. Then it had been back to dithering.

He wrote now and again for Charlotte newspapers, turned down offers of better newspaper jobs in Cleveland and New York for vague reasons of health, and edited a small-town weekly before his health made him give that up, too. (Clayton concludes that Cash suffered recurrent depression, brought on by hyperthyroidism and endocrine imbalance, and aggravated by hard drinking.) Cash's parents weren't well-off, but when his doctor recommended rest and travel they staked him to a European tour. He loved the Parisian *vie bohème* and burst into tears at Chartres, then returned to Boiling Springs, his parents, and his unfinished manuscript.

So everyone was surprised (not least, it seems, his publisher) when he finished *The Mind of the South*. Yet during his seemingly unproductive and aimless 20's and 30's, Cash had been observing and thinking about what he saw: the Gastonia strike, the Klan, political demagoguery, lynchings, the Dayton "monkey trial"—it all comes out in the book, and it's not a pretty picture.

Those Southerners who wanted unstinting loyalty to the homeland weren't pleased. Donald Davidson didn't like the book at all, and said so in one of the few negative reviews the book received. (Characteristically gallant, Davidson regretted that the news of Cash's suicide reached him too late for him to pull the review.) I hate to disagree with Mr. Davidson on this matter, but I do. Twenty-odd years ago, C. Vann Woodward wrote that

"social scientists, especially sociologists," seem to have "a special affinity" for *The Mind of the South*. Maybe that's it.

Anyway, it's true that Cash hated a lot about the South. Occasionally he was imagining things, sometimes he was just being fashionable, but often he was right. And it's obvious that he loved the place, too, because what started out as a smart-aleck essay for Mencken's magazine wound up as a book that any reader should recognize as a cry from the heart.

It's easy to criticize Cash's picture of the South. His almost completely unsympathetic treatment of Southern religion, for instance, strikes me as perversely obtuse. Even when he gets it pretty much right—as I think he does with Southern individualism—he tends to go overboard.

But that almost doesn't matter now. Cash's South may not correspond perfectly or even very well to the real one, but it's certainly a fascinating place. Scholars differ and, I guess, always will about the accuracy of Cash's descriptions and the validity of his explanations, but as a work of the imagination, *The Mind of the South* is a remarkable achievement—far better, as Clayton suggests, than any novel Cash was ever likely to write.

Vann Woodward observed once that Cash himself "was merely illustrating once more that ancient Southern trait that he summed up in the word 'extravagant'"—and that's exactly what some of us like about the book: the sound of its words, the sweep of its history, the boldness and the flamboyance and the very exaggeration of its characterizations. ("Softly; do you not hear behind that the gallop of Jeb Stuart's cavalrymen?")

And that suicide? Some said that Cash was driven to it by worry about the Southern reaction to his criticism, that he was thus a victim himself of what he called the "savage ideal" of conformity. Can we see his self-destruction as a last extravagant Q.E.D.?

No. As Clayton shows, nearly all Southern reviewers liked the book. The real story is less ironic, but even sadder. Shortly before his death he had been hearing nonexistent voices, and he thought the Nazis were out to get him. Clayton concludes that Cash probably killed himself during an episode of delirium tremens caused by

involuntary alcohol withdrawal, the result of a severe case of Montezuma's revenge.

For once in his life, Jack Cash wasn't thinking about the South.

*John Shelton Reed is a sociologist from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, writing this year from northern California. Parts of this letter appeared in his review of Bruce Clayton's W.J. Cash: A Life, in the Raleigh News and Observer.*

## Letter From Canada

by Kenneth McDonald

### Saving the Children



On September 30, 1990, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney addressed the World Summit for Children, of which he was co-chairman, at the United Nations in New York. The event climaxed 18 months of work by over 30 Canadian non-governmental organizations, much of it at the expense of taxpayers whose opinion had not been sought, but who would certainly bear the cost of the consequences.

Sure enough, the next day, in Ottawa, the Mulroney government announced the establishment, within the department of National Health and Welfare, of a central children's bureau. Its purpose is to coordinate federal policies on children and to ensure that "the need to respect children's special needs is recognized at all times."

Papers presented beforehand by the umbrella group—the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children—expressed gratitude to two government departments for their contribution, while Canada's spiffy summit brochure—*Children of Canada, Children of the World*—was acknowledged to be "a collaborative effort involving many departments and agencies of the Government of Canada."

The Canadian Coalition acts "as a collective advocate for children and monitors the role Canada plays vis-à-vis its own children and children abroad." It was established to monitor the signing and ratification by Canada

of the U.N. General Assembly's Convention on the Rights of the Child, an aim that was partly achieved on May 18, 1990, when Brian Mulroney signed it.

There are two stages. Signing implies a commitment to review the U.N. documents and compare them to the signing country's own laws. Ratification, which is expected by Canada early in 1991, binds the ratifying country to abide by the U.N. Convention under international law. (In order that a U.N. Convention can be entered into international law, it must be ratified by at least 20 countries. This was achieved for the children's rights convention by September 1990.) At the time of this writing, 61 countries had both signed and ratified, 72 had signed but not ratified, and the United States had "initialed" it but neither signed nor ratified.

When Canada ratifies, it will bind itself to comply with the articles (there are 54) of the U.N. Convention, which applies to "every human being below the age of eighteen years"—unless local laws establish majority earlier—and covers a full range of rights: nondiscrimination, rights to life and identity, the basic freedoms, access to health care and education, and protection from economic exploitation.

To back this up—and to fill in the details of the ratifying countries' commitment—the U.N. issued a Plan of Action for national governments. Among its requirements:

- increase development finance for debtor countries;
- create a more open and equitable trading system;
- redirect resources from reduced military expenditures to aid programs, including those benefiting children;
- target debt-relief schemes toward children's programs;
- target more development aid to primary health care, basic education, low-cost water and sanitation programs;
- aid to children to be part of strengthened development programs "combining revitalized economic growth, poverty reduction, human resource development and environmental protection";

- statistics to be shown "by gender" so that any inequitable effect on girls and women can be monitored and corrected;
- achieve, by nominated years, goals set for the attainment of better health care, immunization, and elimination of preventable diseases.

Throughout, the emphasis is on what *governments* are to do. Since it was *non-governmental* organizations (NGOs) that had so big a hand in setting up the summit, perhaps we should take another look at them.

An NGO is a non-profit organization, and the combination—nongovernment and nonprofit—conveys an impression of dedicated volunteers putting freely given contributions to work for the charitable purposes to which they devote their lives. On closer inspection, your average NGO may be nonprofit, but its distance from the public purse is somewhat shorter than arm's length.

The Canadian government's International Development Agency (CIDA) provides NGOs and their partners with "matching" government grants in a ratio of three from the government to one from privately raised funds toward overseas projects, and one-for-one grants to cover their operating expenses in Canada. CIDA also fosters "partnerships and networking" among international volunteer groups, improves the skills of staff volunteers by helping them diversify their funding sources, and focuses on organizations that "complement and enhance Canadian development initiatives."

Prompted by the umbrella NGO—the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children—Canada was one of six initiating countries that brought the summit to life; the others, all of which had ratified the convention by September 1990, were Egypt, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan, and Sweden. Thus it's safe to say that the Canadian Coalition's Statement of Principles is a pretty good guide to what's in store for the governments of other ratifying countries down the road.

For instance, since every child, by virtue of the convention, is guaranteed the right to an adequate standard of living, the Coalition recommends that

governments commit, through social assistance, education, and health care initiatives, to protecting all children adequately from the effects of poverty.

Within Canada, the three levels of government are called on to implement "a comprehensive preventive social policy which includes such components as prenatal and postnatal health care, affordable housing programs, parental support, particularly in respect of single parents and child refugee claimants, and educational and social programs including those provided through public education institutions."

Progress is to be monitored from annual reports to the House of Commons "in a detailed manner" on the state of children in Canada and also on what the federal and provincial governments are doing toward attainment of the summit's goals for children in Canada and abroad. To this end, the federal government is asked to improve the collection of statistics relating to child poverty within Canada.

Only once, in this shopping list of what governments are supposed to do, are parents mentioned, and then only as subjects for whom governments provide "parental support, particularly in respect of single parents." It is as if what used to be called fathers and mothers were not around anymore and had abdicated to the state responsibility for the children they gave birth to.

Surprisingly, the government of Canada admits, in the introduction to its summit brochure, that while it has "a major role to play in ensuring the well-being of children, it cannot carry out this mission alone. Many areas of public policy and services affecting children are the responsibility of the governments of the provinces and territories that make up Canada, while others are shared by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments. In addition there are hundreds of municipal and town councils, school boards, other public agencies and nongovernmental organizations. All play critical roles in ensuring the well-being of Canada's children."

Nowhere in any of this is the recognition that government intervention has made it harder for people to create the wealth that all societies need in order to function; that government borrowing for social programs has fueled inflation and diminished peo-

ple's earning power; that government-fueled inflation has pressured wives and mothers to go out to work; that parents have been told that they must pay the government to provide "day-care" centers. Now, the same government is telling parents that it will assume stewardship of the children; and finally, that parents must contribute to the upkeep of foreign governments embracing similar policies abroad.

Front and center in the state's assumption of stewardship are the schools, and it is only natural that they should exemplify the state's encroachment. David Hillen, who heads the English department in an Ontario high school, wrote (in *The Idler*, November/December 1990) that "It is hard to exaggerate the all-pervasiveness of politics in education. . . . The political will to monitor and control the education system in some kind of total, quasi-totalitarian way has a long history in Ontario. It seems to be gaining momentum again. . . . The power of

the collective dominates." Boosting this collective are the government-funded "women's groups," whose agendas are openly socialist.

For them and the rest of the Canadian left, universal government-funded daycare is a rallying cry. Child-care advocates are calling for a program to raise the number of children cared for from the government's presently projected 200,000 to one million by 1999. When Health and Welfare Minister Perrin Beatty warned "there won't be large amounts of money for new programs," and that the government would look instead toward private-sector involvement in social policy, Janet Davis, president of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, charged that this would "replicate the American market-oriented model. We don't want the private sector to provide the services. . . . How can you embark on a major new social program if the deficit is still the number one priority?"

In fact it is the deficit that offers relief from the state intervention that

caused it. Canada's total debt is almost double, per capita, that of America. Perforce, Ottawa is obliged to cut back on transfer payments to the provinces, which in turn are cutting back on transfers to municipalities that were getting, on average, about half their revenues from the other two levels of government. Municipalities are where the buck stops. Unlike the other two levels, they can borrow only for capital projects. Their budgets must be balanced, and their ability to do that is pressed three ways: by declining transfers, by their own recession-starved revenues, and by provincial governments shifting responsibilities onto them while dreaming up new programs that municipalities have to pay for.

This has led to dramatic increases in the property taxes that are municipalities' chief source of revenue. In southwestern Ontario, when some business enterprises were faced with increases of as much as 100 percent, they revolted—not by refusing to pay the taxes, but by threatening to withhold the business portion until taxes were either reduced or frozen at 1990 levels. Groups are spreading across the province dedicated to forcing accountability upon their local councils. George Lansens, a pioneer of the movement who employs about ninety people in three engineering plants near Windsor, told me that he's not in the solving business; the purpose of the freeze is to get politicians' attention and to force them to do the job they're elected for, namely to decide, from a finite amount of tax revenue, how it is to be allocated.

The focus of these groups is not daycare but the related issue of education spending—which amounts to as much as 70 percent of the property tax in some places. This argues a need for a different way of funding public schools, but also for more local control of an education system that is now run by remote bureaucrats. David Hillen promotes funding through a voucher system, "thus effectively giving the client control over the educational service sought." His and Mr. Lansens' resistance is one of the few signs in Canada of a renewed interest in federalism.

*Freelance writer Kenneth McDonald lives in Toronto.*

## LIBERAL ARTS

### JOHN C. CALHOUN ON WAR

"A bullying menacing system has everything to condemn and nothing to recommend it—in expense it is almost as considerable as war—it excites contempt abroad, and destroys confidence here. Menaces are serious things, and, if we expect any good from them, they ought to be resorted to with as much caution and seriousness as war itself; and should, if not successful, be invariably followed by it."

—House of Representatives, December 12, 1811

"War, in this country, ought never to be resorted to but when it is clearly justifiable and necessary; so much so, as not to require the aid of logic to convince our reason nor the ardor of eloquence to inflame our passions. There are many reasons why this country should never resort to war but for causes the most urgent and necessary. It is sufficient that, under a government like ours, none but such will justify it in the eye of the nation."

—House of Representatives, December 12, 1811

"This business of war was a serious one. War created the means of its own continuance. It called into being mighty influences which were interested in carrying it on; and few nations ever terminated war, so long as they possessed the means of carrying it on."

—Senate, January 5, 1848

## POLITICS



Jeanne Berg

### Going It Alone

by Frank Bryan

#### The Case for Vermont's Secession

As the high lunacy of the 1990 budget negotiations showed, America's federal arrangement has been replaced by a confederation of special interests that have less in common than the former colonies—or even, perhaps, than the states that comprise the United Nations. America resembles more a League of Interests than it does a nation.

The solution is too obvious to be seriously considered. We must spread out the work of democracy. We must decentralize, deregulate, and reimpose power; not under the assumption that this will mean less government, but under the knowledge that it will mean better government. John McClaughry and I put it this way in *The Vermont Papers*:

This then is the great American challenge of the twenty-first century: saving the center by shoring up its parts, preserving union by emphasizing disunion, making cosmopolitanism

possible by making parochialism necessary, restoring the representative republic by rebuilding direct democracy, strengthening the national character through a rebirth of local citizenship.

But a "new" federalism created through incrementalism will never happen. It is time for something different. What we need must be radical. It must be dramatic. Vermont should secede.

There is only one serious argument against such a move and that is that other states might follow suit. The answer to this is to give Vermont the opportunity to conduct what Langdon Winner calls "niche" analysis. His hope for societal advancement is to allow certain systems broad latitude in sociopolitical experimentation. We do this now on a very small scale to test out limited kinds of public policy. America should give Vermont the slack it needs to steer its own course. We contribute about one-tenth of one percent of the national tax base. Hence while New York or California could not secede under the present circumstances, Vermont can. What this country needs is a good swift slap alongside the head, and Vermont is just the state to give it.

As Vermonters we stand on the high ground. For two centuries we have worked from within to preserve and enhance the Union. We have been patient. We have carried more than our share of the load. But enough is enough. If the federal government applies every red cent Vermonters pay in income taxes to what it has already lost in the FMHA, HUD, and S&L scandals, it will take us until 2052 to pay it back. Our contribution to the national government for the next half century has already been spent. This isn't *wasted* money. It is *lost* money.

Last spring, soon after seven of seven Vermont communities voted overwhelmingly to secede from the union, I spoke at Blue Mountain High School in Wells River. The occasion: the burning of their mortgage for the new school building. They were debt-

free. These good people in their three little towns with their little school and burdened with big property taxes belied up every year for twenty years and paid back what they owed, principal plus interest.

In Washington the interest on the debt threatens to take one-third of our tax money each year. To retire the debt would require a stack of thousand-dollar bills 204 miles high.

Leaving the Union will involve the breaking of no promises. Our contract with America made two hundred years ago has been trashed by a national government with an unquenchable thirst for power. When we signed on, the American Constitution ensured us that "the powers not delegated to the U.S. by the Constitution nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people." Is there anyone left in America today over the age of six who does not understand that the reserved power clause has become a joke? The author of a leading college textbook puts it this way: "Actions by Congress and the Federal Courts have gradually undermined the 10th Amendment. It now bears little relevance to the configuration of American Federalism in the 1990's."

When the Supreme Court held in 1985 that the Congress could control the way localities in the states deal with their own municipal employees, a dissenting judge said: "All that stands between the remaining essentials of state sovereignty and Congress is the latter's underdeveloped capacity for self-restraint." Just this year Vermont decided it was hopeless to pursue a case before the courts whereby we sought to retain our right to set a retirement age for our own judges. And when the feds want control over something so clearly a state's right that even the most centrist judge can't find a way to make it "constitutional," the Congress takes the right away by threatening to withhold *our own money* from us. These are called "crossover sanctions." In the 1980's Ronald Reagan, in an act of mind-wrenching hy-

pocrisy, convinced Congress to withhold highway repair funds from states like Vermont unless we raised our drinking age to 21.

\* \* \*

There is no state in the Union as historically predisposed to secession as Vermont.

In his book about Vermont, *Contrary Country*, historian Ralph Nading Hill recalls storyteller Walter Hard's memorable Vermont character, Grandma Wescott. Once curiosity got the better of her and she went to a revival meeting. After a long-winded sermon, the traveling preacher approached the audience, sweat oozing from his brow. When he reached Grandma Wescott's seat, he bent over and beamed encouragingly: "Sister, are you a Christian?"

"Not in this church, I ain't!" she snapped.

Vermonters are good Americans. But somewhere along the way they've switched churches on us. The patriotic thing to do is politely to excuse ourselves.

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Vermont was America's first frontier. It was born free, never a colony of the crown, never a territory of some distant power. For 14 years (1777-1791) it existed as an independent republic doing those things nations did in those days—coining money, raising armies, engaging in foreign relations. We joined the Union free and clear in 1791, the 14th state.

Sort of. We sat out the War of 1812, our beef cows feeding the British army in Canada—a move we can remind our northern neighbors of during secession. We also ignored the Fugitive Slave Act. Vermont Supreme Court Justice Theophilus Harrington demanded a "Bill of Sale from the Almighty" before he would return a runaway slave.

In 1867 Vermont provided a staging ground for the Irish Fenians who attacked Canada from Franklin, Vermont. United States marshals had been sent to Vermont to halt the process. We ignored them. In 1917, before America declared war on Germany, Vermont did so, in effect, by appropriating one million dollars (real money in those days) for war against Germany. The largest newspaper in the state editorialized that if Vermont insisted on fighting the Germans all by herself, we should raise taxes instead of issuing bonds to pay for it!

In 1927 the worst national disaster in the state's history struck. After the flood, Vermonter Calvin Coolidge offered federal help. Replied Governor John Weeks: "Vermont will take care of its own." A few years later the nation offered to bail Vermont out of the Depression with the biggest public works program in the history of the state—a Blue Ridge Parkway-like highway down the top of Vermont's famed Green Mountains. Nope, said Vermont to an astonished America. In the most democratic expression of environmental consciousness in American history, Vermonters assembled in their town meetings in March of 1936 and voted to reject the proposal and all the federal loot that went with it. In September of 1941 the Vermont legislature passed a law providing for funds for Vermont soldiers to fight Japan. Said historian Ralph Nading Hill: "In 1941 Vermont declared war on Japan before Washington did."

No state, including Texas, can

match Vermont's independence. Still, to think about secession conjures up the worst kind of imaginings. But they are false fears.

*Vermont is too small to be a nation again.* Sitting in the United Nations today are the representatives of twenty-five nations with populations smaller than Vermont's. Each of these nations has voting rights in the General Assembly equal to those of the United States of America. More importantly, small nations have been asked to sit on the Security Council. Guido de Marco from Malta, representing a nation with two-thirds the population of Vermont, was elected and is now serving as president of the 45th General Assembly.

*Vermont's tiny economy would be swallowed up by giant international trading systems.* In actuality, it is becoming evident that small nations have great advantages in the international marketplace. Gary S. Becker, the highly respected University of Chicago professor, writes (in an October 1, 1990, *Business Week* article): "Bigger isn't necessarily better . . . Smaller countries tend to be more nimble traders in international markets, offsetting their lack of economies of scale."

Vermont products have always had a special mystique. They are prized outside Vermont as much as for what we are as for what they are. If anyone thinks Vermont ice cream or Vermont maple syrup or Vermont cheese would suffer if Vermont became the Switzerland of North America needs to read an introductory textbook in marketing.

*A little state like Vermont is too dependent on the federal dole to go it alone.* Question: would you rather have \$10,000 to spend any way you want or \$11,500 that you have to spend as I say? Two things stand out in the debate over Vermont's return on its tax dollar from the federal government. One is that this return is much smaller than most people believe. A fair estimate is that we get back \$1.15 for every dollar we pay in. The second is that even this small positive ratio is on the decline.

When one considers the hassle one must go through to get that extra 15 cents on a dollar (grant applications, dealings with the federal bureaucracy), the benefit of federal money may already be nil. Add to this the fact that

much of the money we get from Washington we spend on things we don't need in order to get funds for things we *do* need. Top it off with the realization that every dime we get back over and above what we pay in is borrowed money (deficit money).

Even some of the original one dollar we pay in taxes probably comes back in bad (borrowed) money. In other words, if the deficit is over 15 percent of the budget, then 15 percent of our federal payback is borrowed money. In order to give us back \$1.15 for every \$1.00 we pay in, the federal government would have to borrow 17 cents. In these terms, Vermont's "great deal" looks like this: for every dollar Vermonters pay in federal taxes, we get back 98 cents in cash and a loan of 17 cents. If we kept our original buck we could decide whether or not to borrow an extra 15 cents on our own terms and we could spend the whole thing as we see fit.

It is true that Vermont benefits from something we might call "national infrastructure," the most obvious example of which is the defense budget. The interstate highway might be another example. But remember this. The interstate system was built under the National Defense Highway Act. We paved over a good deal of Vermont in large part because Washington needs these roads (or so they said) to defend America. Against what? An attack from Canada? Soviet troops sled-dogging it over the polar ice cap?

Think of the Vermont tax dollars that go into the U.S. defense budget now. Vermont will need no army after secession. A couple of dozen more state troopers and a militia organized from local fire and rescue organizations at no expense to the Republic will be enough. American tanks rolling into Bennington? It'll never happen. All we have to do is simply assert our independence and leave. Our very act of secession will be our greatest strength. We have an open border to the north to a country that owes us for our benign neglect during the War of 1812 and to a province of that country with secessionist ideas of its own.

"It takes big government to solve big issues": the *Star Wars* argument. My opponent in the secessionist debates, Vermont Supreme Court Justice John Dooley, stated that "Acid rain won't be

ended by cute little nations like a new Republic of Vermont." Wrong. The history of the last two decades has shown an increasing incapacity of the federal government to make progress where real conflict among the states exist.

The federal government likes to "facilitate" cooperation and then take credit for natural impulses for consensus that are locally inspired. It is the states and localities that are "putting Washington to shame," as one publication recently put it, in the field of environmental protection. In Vermont we find again and again that Washington is a hindrance to attempts to protect the environment. Nowhere is the principle that mediocrity is the best you can hope for when problems and benefits are diffused over large systems more

apparent than in environmental protection. It can be argued, for instance, that the federal government *caused* the acid rain problem because it was forced to compromise over smokestacks and scrubbers when it sought to protect Midwestern cities from their own pollution in the 1970's.

The fact of the matter is that Vermont's influence as an independent Republic would be vastly greater than even the best efforts of our Senators in Washington can produce. *International* cooperation rather than *intra-national* action is the emerging dynamic in environmental policy. The 21st century must develop a global perspective on the environment. Both Vermont and the world of nations would benefit from our active and equal participation in this perspective.

## GREAT TOPICS, GREAT ISSUES

**Family Liberation** — October 1990 — Edwin West on restoring family autonomy in education, Leonard Liggio on how the Total State undermines both family and religion, John Wauck on Allan Carlson's *The Swedish Experiment in Family Politics*, and Thomas Fleming on how moral regulation is a sure sign of state despotism. Plus Anne Marie Morgan on abortion and parental consent, and David Slavitt on *Dick Tracy*.

**Good News** — December 1990 — Eight reasons why things aren't as bad as you think: by George Garrett, E. Christian Kopff, Chilton Williamson Jr., Jane Greer, Odie B. Faulk, Harold O.J. Brown, John Shelton Reed, and Janet Scott Barlow. Plus arguments for happiness from Thomas Fleming and Katherine Dalton, George Core on George Garrett's Christopher Marlowe novel, and Murray Rothbard on Thomas Sowell's "affirmative scholarship."

**Discovering the Past** — February 1991 — Forrest McDonald on the study of history, M.E. Bradford on the Constitutional Convention, and Charles Causley on the role the past plays in his poetry. Plus George Garrett on John Updike's *Rabbit at Rest*, Fred Chappell on the best and worst of Donald Hall, David Slavitt on the life and work of O.B. Hardison, and Thomas Fleming on modern American verse.

**American Nationalism and the Global Village** — November 1990 — Clyde Wilson on American nationalism, Samuel Francis on race and group identity in the "new nationalism," and Theodore Pappas on the national service debate. Plus James Bond Stockdale on the tragedy of Vietnam, William Hawkins on international trade and protectionism, and R. Cort Kirkwood on the congressional fight for more extensive identification papers.

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Vermont hasn't the wherewithal to govern itself as a nation. During our debates last year Justice Dooley made only one argument that rankled me. He claimed Vermonters were incapable of governing themselves. You think Washington is bad, went the argument, you ought to see Montpelier.

The judge said that to become a Republic again Vermont would have to amend its constitution and, worse, give up elements of the federal Constitution that protected our civil rights and liberties. God knows what would happen in Vermont, he said, if we depended on ourselves for these protections. Such a conclusion is not only hopelessly cynical and pessimistic but it flagrantly ignores both our history and our present situation.

I find it remarkable and even amusing that Justice Dooley, himself a Democrat and a former working member of Democratic Governor Madeleine Kunin's administration, would claim that recent events (among the most prominent of which is the com-

ing to power of the Democratic Party) have rendered the most liberal (small "I" please), democratic, and politically ethical state in the Union incapable of protecting itself from its own darker side. Perhaps Justice Dooley has more faith in the U.S. Supreme Court as a protector of his civil rights and liberties now that it has named a New Hampshire judge to its ranks.

Sure there are too many lobbyists in Montpelier. But at least we know who they are. Sure there is waste in government, but at least we have a better chance of knowing where. Sure there are jerks elected to public office, but at least it becomes obvious to us very quickly who is one of them. Karl Hess, the Goldwater-speechwriter-turned-radical, said it best. "Adolph Hitler as the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany was a horror. Adolph Hitler in a neighborhood would be a 'bully.'" We might well add this: Adolph Hitler in a town meeting is a dead duck.

Let me close these remarks as I did at the First Congregational Church at Bennington on the occasion of Vermont's first debate on the secession question:

There comes a time, my friends, when the old ways are not enough. There comes a time when responsibility can only be served with frontal action. Whether it be a workplace, a private club, or even such sacred institutions as family or church, there comes a time when the cry "working from within" becomes a hollow testimony to fear and apathy and yes, immorality.

There comes a time when separation is the only act consistent with conscience. There comes a time, too, when leaving carries with it an enduring hope—the hope that walking away will convince those who stay behind of the degree to which the crisis is real. There is a hope, in other words, that Bob Dylan's haunting lyrics of leaving, "There ain't no use to sit and wonder why, babe" can be revised: there is a time to sit and wonder why.

For Vermont the time for

leaving has come. Let them speak of us in the future in a way similar to the way that Robert Frost, former Vermont poet laureate now buried near this very church, spoke of himself: "I had a lover's quarrel with the world." Let them say of us, "They had a lover's quarrel with America."

Let our leaving be then an act of deep caring, even of love—a positive affirmation of our dreams for the United States.

We have only to summon the will that still winds through the hills of Vermont; the will that bade Ethan Allen (when lawyers from New York tried to buy him out of his leadership of the Green Mountain Boys) to look his tempter in the eye in Albany and proclaim, "The gods of the hills, sir, are not the gods of the valleys"—the will that bade him reply when asked the meaning of his words: "Return with me to Bennington and I will show you."

The gods of the hills are in this great meeting hall today. Let us cry out in peace. We offer not the shot heard round the world, but the vote heard round the world. Let it be said of Vermont by the historians of the year 2091: "More than anything else it was the secession of Vermont from the Union one hundred years ago that shook America to its very roots and caused the revolution in federalism that saved the Republic."

I ask you, therefore, to stand and vote for the secession of Vermont from the United States of America.

They did.

Frank Bryan is a professor at the University of Vermont and author, with John McClaughry, of *The Vermont Papers: Recreating Democracy on a Human Scale*. In 1990 he stumped around the state with Vermont Chief Justice John Dooley, debating the pros and cons of secession.

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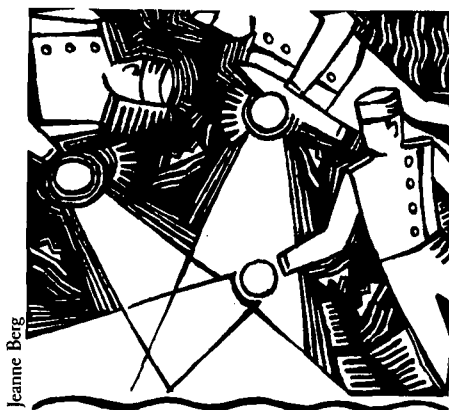
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## Returns

by David R. Slavitt

### The Godfather Part III

Produced by Francis Ford Coppola

Written by Mario Puzo and  
Mr. Coppola

Directed by Mr. Coppola

Released by Paramount Pictures

### Awakenings

Produced by Walter F. Parkes and

Lawrence Lasker

Written by Steven Zaillian

Directed by Penny Marshall

Released by Columbia Pictures

### Alice

Produced by Robert Greenhut

Written and directed by

Woody Allen

Released by Orion Pictures

The return of Francis Ford Coppola to the Godfather epic was clearly the movie event of 1990. The first two parts of the Godfather series had both won Oscars (Best Picture), and there was so much pressure—or skepticism—about the likelihood of a third film maintaining their extraordinarily high level that the critics wound up being kindly in their treatment. In a bizarre way, Coppola had become an underdog for whom it was impossible not to root. There was also the possibility that innocent movie-going was still alive and that some of these critics, remembering the earlier pictures and their easy zest, just wanted to have a good time.

Coppola seems to have understood

this and exploited it. *Godfather Part III* is frankly nostalgic, full of references and clips of the earlier movies, which are not mere embellishments but structural elements. He seems to be encouraging the audience to join Michael Corleone in a sentimental wallow. Al Pacino is not only respectable now but enfeebled, the ravages of eight years having taken a greater toll on him than on such other continuing players as Diane Keaton or Talia Shire. He seems less dangerous, devious perhaps but mostly benign. Menace is left to the likes of Joey Zasa (Joe Mantegna), an ambitious younger hoodlum, or to Michael Corleone's nephew—Sonny's illegitimate son—Vincent Mancini (Andy Garcia). The real plot of the film is the way in which Vincent becomes Michael's surrogate son and the heir to the enterprise, while its theme is Michael's frustration as he tries to become legitimate and respectable. "The higher you go, the crookeder it gets," he says.

It's an uneven film, shorter than the two earlier parts, but draggier and fuzzy in some of its details. The opening, in which Michael Corleone is awarded the Order of San Sebastian, is stately and handsome: Gordon Willis is still running the cameras and has become ever more painterly, which is not always a good thing, especially during some of the boring sections in the middle—we're not supposed to be so aware of how pretty these shots are. But the last half hour or so, corny, extravagant, and frankly operatic, is just fine, an elegant invocation of the real artistic and intellectual tradition in which Coppola is working—the grand gestures of opera stages serve mostly to make palatable a shallow if not absolutely stupid set of notions about life, love, death, and honor. Corleone has at last come home, not only to Sicily but to the opera house in Palermo, where his son, Anthony (Franc D'Ambrosio), is singing Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Concerts and operas have their decorum, as Hitchcock so elegantly demonstrated in several films, and the violence of an assassin lurking in the audience and training his sights upon his victim seems even more shocking than it would in almost any other setting. Coppola is invoking the baptism sequence of the first film and all but matching it—in a wonderfully

good-humored romp that is similarly spectacular (in the sense of eye-glasses).

Less good-humored was the news that on an opening day showing in Valley Stream, Long Island, there were arguments among the audience, one group of ruffians making noise and another making almost as much of a disturbance with their shushing. Guns were drawn, bullets fired, and four people were hit, all of them innocent bystanders. One fifteen-year-old boy was killed. There are a variety of possible readings of this debacle—mine being that the structure of the movie is perhaps too sophisticated for the mass audience for which it was intended, at least by the Paramount executives. Coppola's attitude toward these films has been ambivalent, and he is said to prefer his other, more "serious" and certainly less successful work. The Paramount people were clearly correct, however, to make him an offer he couldn't refuse (this line does not occur in *Godfather Part III*), for the first day's receipts of something more than six million dollars broke all previous one-day records. Nevertheless, some of the audiences are—obviously—restless. The violence in Valley Stream came after the sequence in which Joey Zasa's people massacre a whole slew of Mafiosi in a rooftop restaurant in Atlantic City—a lively if somewhat mannerist demonstration of carnage that woke up the thugs in the audience. But then, after a few minutes, when the delight of this bloodshed was not repeated—Arnold Schwarzenegger knows exactly how many seconds may be allowed to pass between sprayings of red stuff across the screen—they made up the perceived deficiency themselves. In such circumstances, for Michael Corleone to be sickened, tired, and even disgusted . . . seems quite correct.

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I had my own moments of impatience with the picture, but I am less violent than I used to be and even mellower. In a way, it was entertaining to see Coppola's own daughter, Sofia, playing the part of Michael's daughter, Mary, who is in love with her cousin Vincent. She is awkward enough to have attracted a lot of comment, which suggests that Coppola must have noticed her maladroitness and decided, for whatever reason, to leave her in the picture and go with whatever statement that gesture implied. I find myself wondering what it could mean—a contempt for Paramount's money and greed? A way of answering back and signing the picture, claiming it with some piece of sabotage? Or are we to take her in some larger emblematic way, reading in her face a cue to the Old Masters who would put themselves or their family members into altar pieces and other such public performances? The gesture in the direction of opera is clearly a conscious contrivance, to which this may be a complementary trope. She is never quite bad enough to ruin the film, but one notices sufficiently to keep the movie at a slight remove from the immediacy the Valley Stream louts might have preferred.

Of *Awakenings* I have relatively little to say. The picture is worth mentioning for the brilliant performances of Robert De Niro and Robin Williams. The story is of the brief revival of a group of catatonic patients on L-dopa and their relapse to near inertia. It is obviously tear-jerker stuff, a variant on a number of earlier films (*Charly*, for instance, with Cliff Robertson as the retard who is transiently smartened up, but basically *The Prince and the Pauper*). The message, which is trumpeted loudly enough to suggest that Penny Marshall's intended audience is on the lower slope of the bell curve, is that life is precious and we should all be grateful for the gift of each second that is afforded to us. Crankily, I am tempted to counter that if each second is so precious, fewer of them should be wasted on this kind of ersatz uplift . . . but De Niro was so good as to make me decide that I hadn't wasted the time after all. (On the other hand, Robertson got an Oscar for his performance in *Charly*.)

By the end, when De Niro is put

back to bed and we see him reduced to diapered helplessness, Robin Williams, the shy doctor, is finally emboldened to invite Julie Kavner, the noble nurse, to join him for a cup of coffee. Seize the gusto! Live each moment of your life as if it were important! Get the message? Well, we do, and it is difficult to keep from giggling. One feels at such a moment a kind of nostalgia for Sofia Coppola, whose badness was at least interesting enough to think about.

Woody Allen's new piece, *Alice*, is also a return to old themes and techniques. There are some very funny moments, and this is, in many ways, a laudable film. It seems almost churlish to complain that there used to be a bitter tang to some of Allen's humor, a hard edge of cutting anger, and while the sweetness that has replaced it in this good-humored piece is evidence that Allen's life and psyche are in good order, the level of achievement is less lofty than what it was.

This time around, we have Mia Farrow (sounding more and more like Allen as she reads his lines with the hesitations and hitches he once relied on in his own routines) as a victim of surfeit. Julie Kavner comes in to do a short turn as an interior decorator who presents Alice with an eel trap, an odd oblate construction out of wicker-work, and announces, "They're hard to come by," and says, "It's a steal at nine thousand." Alice seems unclear in her reaction, and Julie Kavner advises her to "live with it for a while."

But that's exactly what she is having trouble doing. Her sixteen-year-long marriage to Doug (William Hurt) has turned stale and perfunctory. Alice isn't doing anything but shopping and consuming. It is the predictable mid-life crisis, and, naturally, she meets Joe (Joe Mantegna), with whom she has the predictable affair. What Woody Allen has done to enliven this is to introduce a bizarre Chinese herbalist, Dr. Yang, brilliantly played by Keye Luke from the old Charlie Chan movies. Dr. Yang's packets of herbs and philtres transform not only Alice's life but the film too into a version of Latin-American Magical Realism. The fantasies and dream sequences are not new—Allen has always embellished his movies with these odd riffs, wonderful leftovers from his days as a stand-up comedian. But their impact

now is different, gentler, less driven by panic than by some vision of bliss. Thus, Alice and the ghost of one of her old lovers take flight and soar, Peter Pan-like, over the dreamland of nighttime New York, while lush strings play "Moonlight Becomes You," and there are rather self-conscious beauty shots of the surf of Long Island. It is not supposed to be funny. On the contrary, this is meant as uplifting, and true, and is virtually without irony.

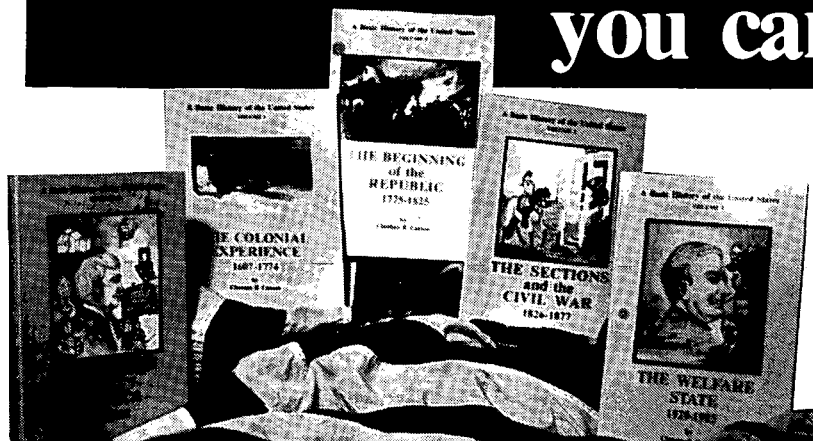
There are some funny bits, and some nostalgic gestures to old movie-movies. One of the preparations of the inscrutable Dr. Yang has the effect of making the patient briefly invisible, and Allen, Farrow, and Mantegna have great fun with this. At another juncture, upset and uncertain, Alice repairs to Dr. Yang's shabby offices for an emergency visit, and she finds that he lives there, and indeed that, at night, it's an old-fashioned opium den. To see Mia Farrow, in her Peter Pan collar and pearls, puffing away on the opium pipe and then curling up on the floor next to another virtually unconscious habitué, is quite mad and splendid. But that manic energy we expected from Allen is only evident in these quick flashes.

At the end, Alice goes off to the streets of Calcutta to join Mother Teresa in her good works (as if the purpose of the starving hordes of Calcutta were to provide spiritual opportunities for New York's matrons sated by Henry Bendel). The treatment of this curious resolution is deliberately straight, clearly un-ironic, for Alice then comes home to work with the Manhattan homeless, and she has "real values" and pours milk for her children!

This dopiness comes, however, after a brilliant piece of plotting that I resist revealing, a bit of business about a love potion Dr. Yang has supplied that is up there with the best of Allen's old work. But I worry about his happiness and mellowness. It's fine, personally, but it doesn't make for the zany, angry, hurt, and puzzled brilliance of such earlier pieces as *Stardust Memories*. The new, happier, more serious Allen seems to be trying to go beyond Fellini and he is nudging up against Frank Capra.

David R. Slavitt is a poet and novelist who lives in Philadelphia.

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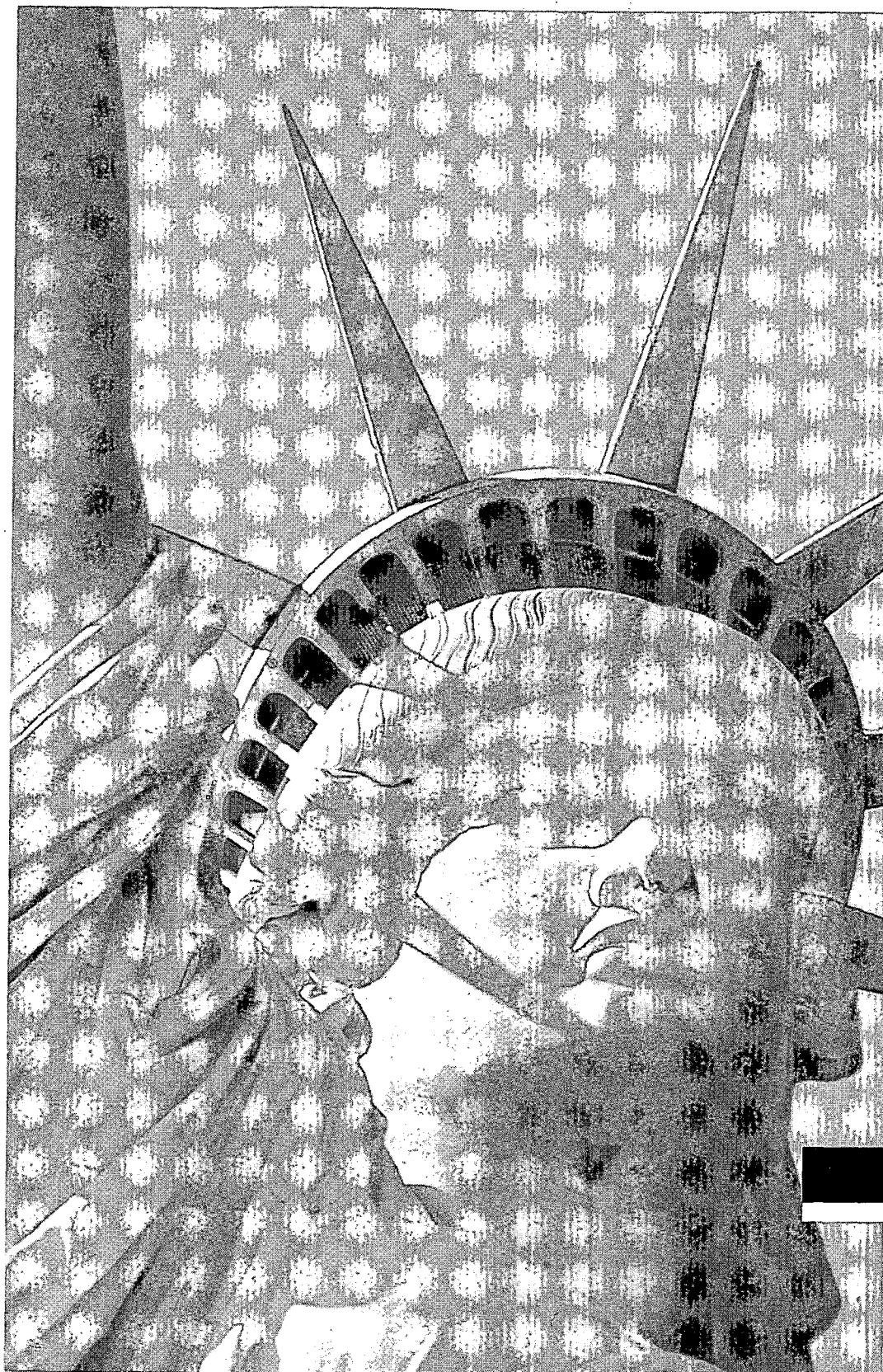
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